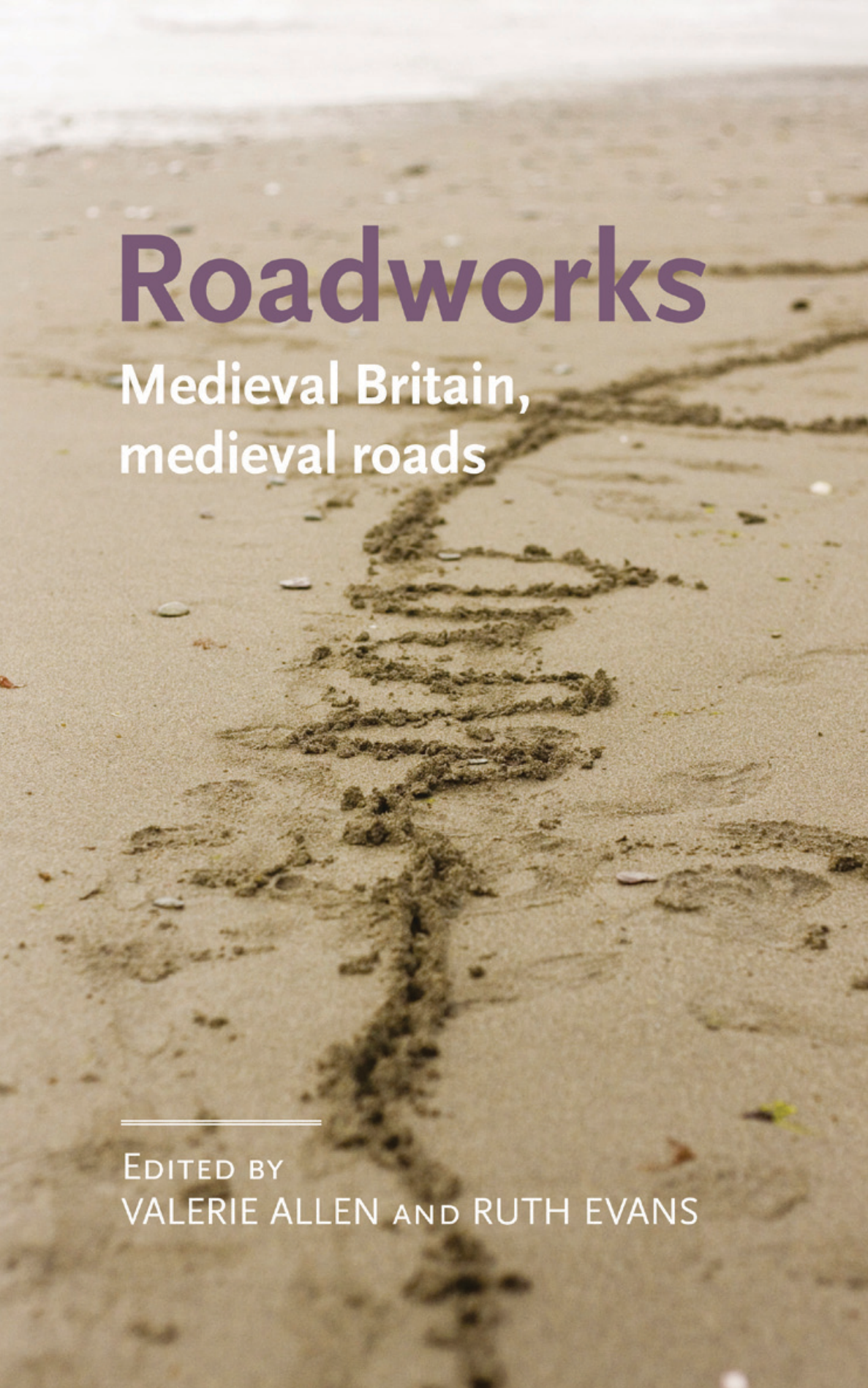


A close-up, low-angle shot of a sandy beach. A series of footprints, some deep and some shallow, lead from the foreground towards the water in the background. The sand is a light tan color, and the water is a pale, hazy blue. The overall mood is serene and evocative.

Roadworks

Medieval Britain,
medieval roads

EDITED BY
VALERIE ALLEN AND RUTH EVANS

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Roadworks

Medieval Britain, medieval roads

EDITED BY VALERIE ALLEN AND RUTH EVANS

Manchester University Press

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Abbreviations

BIA	Borthwick Institute for Archives, York
BL, Add.	British Library, Additional
EETS es	Early English Text Society, extra series
EETS os	Early English Text Society, original series
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
<i>MED</i>	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i>
OE	Old English
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
TNA	The National Archives

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Introduction: roads and writing

Valerie Allen and Ruth Evans

It was the road, wet, rough, and uncertain as it sometimes was, that made the land a kingdom.¹

Roads and writing

In his 1966 discussion of Sigmund Freud's metaphorical model of the structure of the psychical apparatus as a writing machine (the so-called 'Mystic Writing-Pad', a wax pad covered with cellophane, on which a child first writes and then lifts the cellophane to erase the words, only for the words to remain imprinted on the wax below), the philosopher Jacques Derrida yokes together two apparently disparate terms: 'We should have to study together, genetically and structurally, the history of the road and the history of writing.'² He makes a similar comment a year later, this time in the context of a discussion of the work of the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, proposing that 'writing as the possibility of the road and of difference, the history of writing and the history of the road', should be 'meditated upon' together.³

Both comments occur in very different contexts (psychoanalysis and writing; anthropology and writing). Each context provides some potentially suggestive ways of thinking about the material (geographical, political, technological) nature of medieval roads as forms of inscription on the landscape. This is not to say that we believe the reality of roads can only be apprehended in terms of a Wittgensteinian 'language-game' (the linguistic conditions that make it possible to make well-formulated statements about an object of study). Nor do we think that the reality of the medieval road can be reduced to, or made analogous to, a question about how key thinkers figure the metaphor of the track, trace or path in relation to the traditional binaries of writing, whether speech/writing (in the case of Lévi-Strauss), or memory/writing (in the

case of Freud). Rather, Derrida's intriguing juxtaposition of roads and writing draws our attention to their shared cultural histories. This allows us to think about the history of roads in some unexpected and productively new ways.

Derrida observes how Freud's model of the reception and storage of sense data figures writing (the inscription of new knowledge, memories, perceptions in the mind) as a *breaching* and a *broaching*, the 'breaking of a path against resistances, rupture and irruption becoming a route (*rupta, via rupta*), violent inscription of a form, tracing of a difference in a nature or a matter which are conceivable as such only in *their opposition* to writing'.⁴ The etymology of route, Derrida reminds us, is from classical Latin *rupta*, from *via rupta* (broken way). To make inroads, a path must break through resistances; the action of writing, like the action of making a route through nature or matter (ground, wood, forest), is a violent cutting into a surface. The cut of both writing and route-making inscribes difference (there the land, here the path) and creates cultural meaning (the social history of roads; repression and the unconscious).⁵ A necessary wound in the ground, cutting nonetheless preserves the integrity of the land, allowing flora and crops to grow unmolested while feet, wheels and hooves flatten the route.

Derrida returns to this theme a year later, in a discussion of Lévi-Strauss's famous essay 'The Writing Lesson', his meditation on the response of the Nambikwara Amazonian Amerindians to the phenomenon of writing:

One should meditate upon all of the following together: writing as the possibility of the road and of difference, the history of writing and the history of the road, of the rupture, of the *via rupta*, of the path that is broken, beaten, *fracta*, of the space of reversibility and of repetition traced by the opening, the divergence from, and the violent spacing, of nature, of the natural, savage, salvage, forest. The *silva* is savage, the *via rupta* is written, discerned and inscribed violently as difference, as form imposed on the *hylè* [matter, stuff], in the forest, in wood as matter; it is difficult to imagine that access to the possibility of a road-map is not at the same time access to writing.⁶

Contra Lévi-Strauss, who believes that the Nambikwara would be better off without writing, Derrida's point is that writing (traditionally seen as secondary to speech) imposes form on nature, just as a road imposes form on the landscape. The road is not just a

way *into* difference but constitutes difference; writing and roads are cultural systems that create meaning. From this it follows that humans do not so much make roads as that roads make humans. Derrida's entwined analysis of roads and writing suggests that roads themselves make meaning for medieval road goers: directing them along certain paths, taking them on particular journeys, shaping their options even to the very neural pathways along which a train of thought progresses. This compels us to acknowledge how medieval roads inscribe the wayfarer as *homo viator* in ways often more fundamental than how human technology imposes meaning on roads, which is how the action of making tracks is conventionally understood.

Naming

Our title, indeed the founding concept of the book – the medieval British road – is a misnomer. We speak of the road system of medieval Britain but the concept is not referenced in medieval documents. Although given to abstract categorizations when so inclined, as when ontologizing into genus and species, medieval writers show little tendency to group all roads into a universal set. Instead the documents record a welter of terms multiplied by three languages (English, French and Latin) along with Old Norse, insular Celtic and numerous dialects. Furthermore, the word 'road' in the sense of 'thoroughfare' is not even a medieval term, for its first appearance in post-Conquest English occurs in the sixteenth century.⁷ From the late ninth to the sixteenth centuries the most common meanings of 'road' were '(a) Riding; a ride, journey on horseback ...; (b) a riding expedition of a military nature; riding into combat; (c) a raid by mounted men, a foray', and, from the late tenth century onwards, '(a) A voyage; (b) a protected place near shore where ships could lie at anchor'.⁸ It is possible that Old English used *rodu* in the sense of a way or thoroughfare, and that our modern sense of 'path' is the reflex of Old English *rodu* meaning 'clearing, probably also linear clearing, track, way, road', a sense witnessed only in charters and in place names.⁹ For such a common word, the etymology of 'road' is complex, as the long note in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) attests, stating that, 'it is not certain that all of the material contained in this entry [*road* (n.)] shows a single word history. It is also possible that two or more originally distinct words may have merged.'

These points may seem good reasons not to use the word at all, but we employ 'road system' knowingly as a pidgin term, that is, as a phrase that simplifies linguistic communication across heterogeneous language systems and that does good theoretical work, enabling the simultaneous difference and similarity of the medieval past to articulate itself. It is a shorthand that allows us to model the past from a distance, knowing that the closer we get to it, the more the category evaporates into local terms that are variously spelled, that do not translate, and that hold only for certain regions, certain conditions and certain periods. We recognize that the term 'road' is not precise enough to differentiate the concept sufficiently in accordance with huge fluctuations in physical anatomy and jurisdiction. Yet we still need the particular universality of the term, for its generality allows us to make meaningful, if qualified, comparisons between then and now.

One important terminological distinction still current is that between (rural) road and (urban) street, where a road passes from one place to another while a street is situated within a dwelling area (*OED road* [n.] III.4a). A secondary assumption underlying the nomenclature is that the street will be paved and the road not.¹⁰ The conceptual distinction is upheld to some degree in late medieval England, but never systematically marked in language, at least until the early modern era, not least because, as already noted, the word 'road', understood as a path or way for land traffic, rarely if ever appears in Middle English. Other words must serve. 'Way' (*Middle English Dictionary (MED) wei* [n.1]) has an approximate equivalent generic value to road, except that it was usually further specified by an accompanying adjective, hence a 'drove-way' (*MED drove* [v.] 2a) or 'high' way (*MED heigh* [adj.] 2b.e) or 'by' way (*MED bi-wei* [n.]) or 'broad' way (*MED brod* [adj.] 7c.e) or 'hollow' way (*MED holwe* [adj.] 2b) or 'common' way or 'private' way. Without some adjectival determiner, *wei* remains too broad to be fully descriptive. 'Street' can indeed specify a main urban thoroughfare (*MED strete* [n.2] 2a), and is the usual word for referring to a specially surfaced way, although in northern areas, such as York, Danish 'gate' is the usual term, as in Micklegate, Goodramgate, Petergate. The semantic specificity of *strete*, however, like *wei*, capitulates to more general usage, for example in Watling 'Street', the public connector road running through the country between Dover and Wroxeter (*MED strete* [n.2] 1a).

The conceptual differentiation between a street that one inhabits and a road along which one passes holds only to a degree, for every

street must be passed along and there is no road on which one does not at some point tarry. Not every 'street' in the medieval city has architectural structure bordering it or paving and not every rural 'road' is without buildings or treated surface. The variousness of language of record and verbal intercourse in medieval England – English, insular French and Latin, not to mention dramatically different dialects – further loosens bonds between general concept and specific word. Certainly, medieval rural commuter roads and populated urban streets are distinguished by nomenclature, surfacing materials, size, geographical terrain and responsibility for maintenance; but the distinction, which presupposes a town/country, sedentary/mobile polarity, loses any categorical pre-eminence in a plethora of nicer considerations – whether the road is a toll road, or a holloway (sunken road), or raised (i.e. a causeway), or common or private, or wide enough for two carts to pass each other, whether only pedestrians and packhorses can use it. The three main languages of record in medieval England had both distinct terms and borrowings from the other languages – hence Latinized English, Anglicized French and so on. Note the overlap between the following commonly used terms in the three languages: Latin *calcetum*, *drova*, *pavimentum*, *strata*, *semita*, *venella*, *via*, *alta via*, *via regia* or *strata regia*, *vicus*; English *alei*,¹¹ *bi-path*,¹² *wei*,¹³ *hyghe waye*,¹⁴ *causey*,¹⁵ *high strete*, *fare*,¹⁶ *thurghfare*,¹⁷ *gate*,¹⁸ *lane*,¹⁹ *passage*,²⁰ *pathe*, *rute*,²¹ *strete*,²² *wynd*,²³ *venelle*²⁴ (these Middle English terms often carrying specific connotations that do not always correspond semantically to their modern counterparts); French *sentier*, *chemin*, *passage*, *rue*, *rute*, *veneie*, *voie*, to mention only the obvious ones. Add to this the localness of dialect, and, in sum, no exact standard of nomenclature was in place.

Without that terminological plenitude as a means of distinction and individuation, a road is just a road. What looks like medieval resistance to theorization is more like a local-level conceptualization that generalizes for the purpose and is alert to physical distinctions in the landscape that are unavailable to a more linguistically restricted perceptual register. The medieval road lexicon indexes its environment to a high degree of accuracy. By a synecdochal substitution between part and whole, terms such as 'high street' and 'salt way' function both as proper nouns for individual roads, as in York's Micklegate or Worcestershire's Salt Way, and as group names, as particular universal terms. This ability to hold ground between particular place and general category is characteristic of medieval road terminology, as if the general concept can be instantiated right here, in this or that particular place.

The road as right of way²⁵

The medieval highways that run through open terrain rather than through towns may be considered a right of way as much if not more than as a physical entity.²⁶ Travellers could ordinarily expect to be able to move around or alongside obstructions even if doing so took them onto private land. This right of way took precedence over a single, designated line of access, used exclusively for the purpose of travel and with a specially prepared surface. The Victorian Fabian socialists Sidney and Beatrice Webb likened the road as a right of passage to an easement, which is a legal concept that refers to the right of non-possessory use of another's property:

To the citizen of the twelfth, the fifteenth, or even the eighteenth century, the King's Highway was a more abstract conception. It was not a strip of land, or any corporeal thing, but a legal and customary right – as the lawyers said, 'a perpetual right of passage in the sovereign, for himself and his subjects, over another's land.' In one of our oldest law-books it is definitely laid down that 'the King has nothing but the passage for himself and his people.' What existed, in fact, was not a road, but what we might almost term an easement – a right of way, enjoyed by the public at large from village to village, along a certain customary course, which, if much frequented, became a beaten track.²⁷

As a legal concept, an easement is formulated from the viewpoint of the enjoyer of the right to use without possession a road that lies on another person's land. From the viewpoint of the holder of the land, the commuter's prerogative is a servitude or burden on the estate – that is, a duty to act and not act in certain ways: to maintain the road in good repair; not to enclose or encroach onto the road; not to harass travellers. An easement can be further distinguished from a profit, which authorizes the enjoyer to take something, as in pasture rights, where the commuter has the prerogative both to have passage through another's land and to graze livestock there.²⁸ Such a profit can be extended to anyone, not only a tenant. 'The main needs of the agricultural economy of the age can be met in this manner without the creation of any personal obligations.'²⁹

William Hawkins, writing in the eighteenth century, teases out the main implication of the definition of the road as 'good Passage' rather than as 'beaten Track', namely, that travellers have the right to deviate from the pathway onto private land where the road has become impassible:

It hath been holden, that if there be a Highway in an open field, and the People have used, Time out of Mind, when the Ways are bad, to go by Outlets on the Land adjoining, such Outlets are Parcel of the Way; for the King's Subjects ought to have a good Passage, and the good Passage is the Way, and not only the beaten Track; from whence it follows, That if such Outlets be sown with Corn, and the beaten Track be foundrous [difficult to travel on], the King's Subjects may justify going upon the Corn.³⁰

Hawkins's distinction between the right of passage and the beaten track suggests that the medieval road is most profitably defined in terms of function rather than by its anatomical structure and fabric. A road is a road when it allows one to move on it. By defining the road thus in terms of function rather than structure, one is freed to think more abstractly and flexibly about passageway.

The commuter's contract to which Hawkins refers requires a layout of the terrain where road and field are readily accessible to each other. By the sixteenth century, the openness of the fields was rapidly giving way to wholesale enclosure by wall or hedge of private lands in a process that would over centuries wholly alter the appearance of an English landscape, which, in the fourteenth century, had as much as one third devoted to the open field system.³¹ Under such open conditions, one track could become many. Aerial photographs of vestigial medieval country ways show a fingered fan of parallel tracks by means of which travellers would move to the side of roads that had become flooded or obstructed. Enclosure not only corrals multiple tracks into one road but also has the effect of straightening their undulations.³² It also erodes the right of commons (pasturing), an ongoing source of faction between local owners of animals and those who enclose the land.³³

The symbiosis of medieval field and road can be illustrated by Margery Kempe's travels. One hot June day in 1413 finds her with her husband, John, travelling the forty-odd-mile journey from York to Bridlington on the coast, no doubt to visit the shrine of the recently canonized local saint, John of Bridlington.³⁴ (For comparison of distances, consider that during the mid-fourteenth century, a day's journey between Durham and York for a man on horseback in winter was about thirty miles; in summer thirty-six to forty.³⁵) When her husband puts pressure on her to have sex with him despite her wish for celibacy, Margery kneels down and prays 'be-syden a cros in þe feld'.³⁶ Fields are easily accessed, offering a chance to tarry. They supplement a traveller's progress in a continuum of road and landscape as Margery 'went be þe wey &

in þe feldys'.³⁷ They provide an outlet that is 'parcel' of the way, as Hawkins states: not an anatomical part of the way that can be separated from the whole entity; but parcel, integral to the whole collocation we call road.

Outside the towns, in the open road, fields supplement the way, a point evident in Margery Kempe's journeyings, which find her resting at crosses, praying in pastureland, and always 'be þe wey & in þe feldys'.³⁸ Over subsequent centuries that see fields lose their ready adjacency as prosthetic extensions of the medieval road, the very concept of 'passage' undergoes redefinition as the topography changes. Passageway increasingly implies that the traveller should keep on the move, not stopping. Quoting the 1911 edition of *Pratt and Mackenzie's Law of Highways*, the Webbs note that 'the right of the public in a highway is an easement of passage only – a right of passing and repassing. In the language of pleading, a party can only justify passing along, not being in, a highway'.³⁹ Citing various nineteenth-century law cases, they further note: 'It is only inferentially that it has quite recently been suggested that a passenger along a highway may lawfully stop to rest on it for a short time, or to take a sketch ... Any other use of a highway is a trespass.'

In terms of nineteenth-century traffic engineering, then, loiterers are trespassers, yet Middle English *loitren* (to waste time or dawdle) does not carry such sinister legal connotation. The word does strengthen semantically to mean hanging around the place, as in the sixteenth-century *loyter somewhere by the waye* (*OED loiter* [v.] 1a). Thus in 1596 Augustine Reynolds was fined in the Leet Courts of Southampton (the Leet Courts being the proper place of jurisdiction for urban roads) because he 'in contemptuous manner as seemed walked vpp and downe the streats as we [the jury-men surveying the streets] were handlinge the Buisines'.⁴⁰ In an era of still nascent law of loitering, Reynolds's behaviour nonetheless registered as the malicious interference with another's rights. Although highways in the Middle Ages no less than in any other period needed their thoroughfares to remain free of obstruction, the urgency for vehicular speed (and concomitantly, for pedestrian safety) grows in later centuries in tandem with a physiology of the road that effectively segregates pedestrian from vehicle, which medieval roads do not in any systematic manner. Medieval urban streets, narrow by today's standards, were lined with houses and trade stalls. The raised footpath familiar today had no prescribed status in medieval urban areas where wheels, bipeds and quadrupeds frequently shared the same surface, which is one reason

for ordinances protecting against the reckless driving of carts or requiring horses to be led to watering rather than driven.⁴¹ It was not until 1750 that the wealthy residents of Micklegate in York procured planning permission to erect posts to cordon off a space two feet in width for pedestrians to use.⁴² To conclude, the opposition between passageway and loitering increases across the centuries as the road's legal status is increasingly identified with a 'beaten Track' used exclusively by pedestrian, animal and vehicle for travel and as the only conduit along which overland travel should legitimately occur.

By comparison, medieval roads have a higher tolerance for tarrying than the nineteenth century's 'no loitering' ethic. The verb 'to tarry', of unknown origin, is first attested in the 1300s, and its semantic range is wide: obstructing, not moving, moving slowly, lingering, delaying, spending time, protracting. As its etymology suggests, to protract is to draw forward, to lengthen or prolong. In the sense that it means spending time, tarrying is a kind of sojourning, and when that road becomes familiar from long habits of being in it, when one knows it intimately, when it becomes a place where one simply is for a lot of time (say from pasturing sheep, or ferrying produce to market and back) then it becomes a place where one tarries. In the sense that tarry means to protract, it is a kind of extension, such as a road becomes when one traverses it daily, weekly, monthly for years. Where one tarries is where one is, existentially speaking, and where one is is where one thinks. Our interest in medieval roads is as much motivated by how it shapes a traveller's thoughts and lives spent travelling on it as it is in the history of its material, which starts, in many ways, with the Romans.

On Roman roads and their construction⁴³

With some subsequent minor additions as well as commercial routes, the invading Romans had laid out Britain's entire road system during the military advance from 43 to 81 AD, imposing in design, built to be functional – and to intimidate.⁴⁴ The Great Monument at Richborough, visible from the sea, represented the 'symbolic entry into Britain'.⁴⁵ The construction of Roman military roads and the technique of their alignment are largely gleaned from archaeological evidence and informed speculation rather than from surviving documentation, which is sparse. However, the evidence of the Antonine Itinerary, a register that lists the major stations on the roads of the Roman empire and the distances between

them, enables identification and rough mapping of the roads, once constructed. John Ogilby's 1675 map of Britain reveals a road system that in essence preserves the shape of things as they were back in the fifth century – a cephalic formation with the majority of roads radiating from its capital, London.⁴⁶ It was a formation modelled on the Italian imperial example of all roads leading to Rome. This is the shape of empire, of hierarchical power, of a political organism composed of a headquarters or nerve centre that commands and a periphery that obeys. Although the English model was more dispersed than the Italian, London grew to being the hub of command in England, with its roads spreading outward to its immediate depots of Colchester, St Albans, Silchester, Chichester, Rochester, thence further to its distant outposts and regional capitals – Exeter, Bath, Chester, York.

The purpose of these roads was initially military rather than commercial, and the roads were probably constructed and maintained by the legions themselves. Roads – for transportation of foot soldiers, horsed riders, freight carts and the imperial courier service (*cursus publicus*) – were needed to remain passable throughout the winter and wet weather, for which both infrastructure and a treated surface were needed because naturally worn pathways, however hard and dry, will become mud in wet weather and fail to support wheels. For this purpose, the Romans 'metalled' their roads, that is, laid a hard protective surface over the foundation.

Roman roads are famed for their straightness, although that characteristic can be overstated. Not all roads were straight although a 'curved' road will often prove to be an articulation of shorter straight lengths set at angles that crisscross an imaginary geodesic line. The Wealden district of Sussex and Kent has a number of Roman roads built as trade and industrial connectors between the area and London, constructed in the same fashion as the military roads, but without the long stretches of straight alignment.⁴⁷ Before any construction was undertaken, good surveying skills were deployed, which combined a number of different strategies and methods: local familiarity with the terrain; mapping; applied geometric skills already used in land surveying along with devices such as the groma, which measured straight lines and right angles; use of high altitude points from which adjustment angles could be made; marking poles to guide the road builders; milestones to mark distances on road lengths once they were constructed.⁴⁸

The basic construction of a Roman road runs as follows: a wide trough was dug into the flat terrain with earth piled in a heap in the

middle to make two ditches flanking a central mound, now higher than the initial ground level. This central embankment is called an agger, on top of which were placed large rocks and on top of that again, smaller gravel, each layer being rammed down to prevent subsidence. The weight of traffic subsequently helped tamp the crushed stone to consolidate it into a hard packed layer of remarkable solidity. The final effect is an impressive raised road, cambered (arched) in the middle to allow for drainage, which lifts travellers off the ground, giving them security from attack and from water, which collected in the troughs and, with the aid of culverts, could cross beneath the road where, for example, the road ran across sloped land. Local materials were used and the height of the agger and depth of the ditches were contoured to accommodate the conditions and natural drainage of the terrain. Beyond the drainage ditches, a smaller limit ditch often marked the boundary of the road, showing a sense of standardization and protecting the traveller from surprise attacks.

The width of the metalled road surface varied substantially, with Watling Street appearing to have been the widest, and Fosse Way at the other extreme being only half the width. An average estimate is twenty feet (a Roman *pes* being marginally less than an imperial foot). Include the slopes of the agger, the ditches and the cleared ground up to the limit ditches and the swathe the road as a totality cut into the landscape was wide indeed – possibly eighty-four feet at its widest.⁴⁹ In his thirteenth-century customal (document setting out the economic, political and social customs of a manor), Philippe de Beaumanoir's assessment of the measurement of the royal road (*chemin royal*) made by Julius Caesar as sixty-four feet need not be an overstatement.⁵⁰ The reason for the great width of Roman roads, Beaumanoir explains, is 'so that all products of the earth and living things which man and woman live on can be transported or carried along them, so that everyone can come and go and transport supplies for all his needs in the width of the road, and go through cities and castles to carry on his business'.⁵¹ The need for wide roads was greatest in the areas of greatest density, namely, the towns themselves. Hugh Davies speculates that in some stretches, where terrain conditions dictated, the Romans built parallel roads to accommodate traffic flowing in opposite directions – an early instance of a dual carriageway.⁵²

On initially landing at Richborough on the east coast of Kent, the Romans built a road to reach the Thames, the famous Watling Street.⁵³ At first it would have been a roughly constructed affair,

but thereafter constructed more solidly. Watling Street eventually extended as far as Wroxeter, running south-east to north-west, although its initial, critical stretch comprised the passage to the Thames. Watling Street is one of the most famous of the Roman roads in Britain, but there are other ones worth mentioning. The naming of Roman roads can be problematic for they often seem to have been generic (like 'Main Street' in towns in the USA or 'High Street' in towns in the UK). Most confusingly, Watling Street, in addition to naming the road between Dover and Wroxeter, also was given to a road running south-west through Wales from Wroxeter as well as to the main road running north in Northumberland, which we identify as Dere Street in order to distinguish it.⁵⁴

Ermine Street was the great road to the north, beginning at London's north gate, running to Lincoln and subsequently extended to York.⁵⁵ It too is duplicated in the completely different southern road called Ermine Street.⁵⁶ Fosse Way stretched between Lincoln and Exeter.⁵⁷ These three roads – Watling Street, Ermine Street and Fosse Way – are of especial note because they are included in the medieval myth of the king's four roads (the other being the pre-Roman Icknield Way, running east from Norfolk to Wiltshire in the west). We might also mention two roads that played their part in controlling the north and subsequently in the English/Scottish borders: Stanegate, which cut across England from Carlisle to Corbridge, and may have continued as far as Newcastle;⁵⁸ and Dere Street (sometimes confusingly called Watling Street), which ran north from York to Stanegate, and, later, further north to the Antonine Wall.⁵⁹

Post-Roman Britain saw the deterioration of much of the road system. The travelling needs of the Saxon settlers being more local, the long stretches of Roman road would often break into shorter stretches of continuous road. The roads also served not as thoroughfares but as boundary bands between neighbours and, over time, between parishes.⁶⁰ By comparison with Roman skills of surveying and civil engineering, medieval road building can look shabby, and this is the conventional old view. In the words of one early twentieth-century writer: 'The Roman art of road-making seems to have been forgotten. Road-making or road-repairing degenerated into the mere casting down of rough stones on to a more or less unprepared surface.'⁶¹

Yet to describe medieval road-building skills in terms of loss and forgetting says little about the directedness of medieval technology. This is a period that produced engineering skills capable

of building sturdy stone bridges and towering Gothic cathedrals. And there is method to the roads of medieval England, however ad hoc or dilatory they may have been relative to other periods. Space is not the empty container in which an historical era resides. Rather the space that becomes the road system of medieval England is the technological form that the period assumes. The apparent poverty of medieval road technology relative to the standard of other periods invites us to rethink narratives of progress and regress, as well as 'efficiency', as any kind of absolute value.⁶²

Perhaps medieval England's greatest testimony to the ideological import of Roman roads is its unacknowledged appropriation of them for a national history. That history begins around 1130, with Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum*, and is subsequently elaborated in the *Leges Edwardi Confessoris* and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*, then by Wace and Laȝamon, among others.⁶³ Henry of Huntingdon writes of the king's four roads that stretch the length and breadth of the realm: Watling Street, Ermine Street, Fosse Way and what appears to be the pre-Roman Icknield Way (rather than Ryknield Way, which is further north).⁶⁴ Tapping into the numerological mystique of quaternity, the four roads invoke a land unified throughout to its four corners, with the roads conveniently extended where necessary to stretch from shore to shore; for example, Lincoln is the terminus for Fosse Way, but in many of the documents it was connected to the northern roads into Scotland to make it embrace the entire landmass. According to the tradition, all (law-abiding) travellers on these roads enjoyed the special privilege of the king's peace, which afforded them physical protection and criminalized any assault committed thereon. Yet, as Cooper points out, legal sources give no evidence for royal jurisdiction being constrained to only these four roads. It was a 'twelfth-century fabrication' that appeared to give continuity to the Old English legal principle of the king's peace and identifies solid infrastructure as the legacy of strong rule.⁶⁵ The fiction's real use, Cooper argues, lay both in its ability to create a legal loophole to argue that a particular road was *not* under royal jurisdiction, and, more importantly for this collection, in representing roads as the designated space of protected movement where territories are assembled and disassembled, boundaries crossed and travellers acquire the special status of legal subject.

The chapters

We discuss chapters in the order in which they appear in the table of contents. We open with Paul Hindle's 'Sources for the English medieval road system', which offers a compact review of the different kinds of evidence for medieval roads in situ prior to the Black Death of the mid-fourteenth century and how the pre-medieval system can be cross-referenced with medieval roads. His treatment is of open or rural roads, especially those in landlocked areas, rather than those near waterways or running through urban areas, which usually had a different story to tell about their construction and upkeep. Those open roads combined the inherited Roman system and newer roads that had generally come into use 'from habitual lines of travel', linking towns and villages that grew up subsequent to Roman occupation. Such roads are better defined in terms of function, as a right of way, rather than of structure, as a physical strip of track. Few roads were intentionally planned and built, in contrast to modern civil engineering, except occasionally for reasons such as military access or as an alternative to a route rendered impassable. Most have disappeared, having been paved over, or ploughed, or built upon, for which reason, Hindle says, the student of medieval roads must 'begin in the library rather than in the field'. Indeed, without documentary corroboration, it would be hard to identify with certainty any field evidence for a medieval road.

Documentary evidence derives mostly from the petitions and inquests scattered through government and institutional archives, which offer partial knowledge of some stretches of road. Further details come from purveyance accounts, which record the transportation of supplies and commodities. When named after particular associated industries, roads enable reconstruction of trade routes. Names with particles embedded in them such as *-way*, *-stretton* and *-gate* can trace the contours of a former road. Itineraries made by contemporary chroniclers constitute a rich source of evidence for travel routes, though even more exhaustive are the itineraries of royal progresses and expeditions compiled over the last two centuries by historians from extant letters, charters and household accounts.

A handful of contemporary maps, most notably the Matthew Paris maps and the Gough map, delineate England's main routes, including old Roman roads, and they help us understand the actual field evidence of tracks and bridges.⁶⁶ The tracks are of various kinds, for example: holloways, or sunken roads, running down

slopes; lynchets ways or terraces cut into the sides of slopes; tracks running across fields; causeways across boggy ground. Stone bridges are more likely to have survived than tracks, and will generally be well documented in contemporary accounts.

Aside from documentary and field evidence, a third line of inquiry that Hindle identifies is a theoretical estimate of the usage and importance of a road running between any two towns by means of an algorithm derived from calculating the product of two towns' populations divided by the square of the distance between them. This formula is of only limited use for medieval roads because of the incompleteness of population data and the riskiness of presupposing an integrated economy, which can be asserted really only of the central and southern parts of late medieval England, the other regions being more sporadically integrated. This observation is worth keeping in mind when reading Christine Chism's consideration of the southern stretch of Watling Street, between London and Dover, and the two chapters treating of roads in Wales and the Scottish marches, by Dylan Foster Evans and Richard Oram respectively.

Alan Cooper's 'Once a highway, always a highway: roads and English law, c. 1150–1300' follows the changing legal status of public roads through the medieval period, and in doing so sets the legal scene for the later Middle Ages, the period largely covered in this collection. His argument is that in cumulative changes over centuries, which he groups under four critical moments, English law, having moved away from late Anglo-Saxon law of the road, returned by the late thirteenth century to a version of that law, yet with important changes in assumptions about sovereignty and public rights.

In the Anglo-Saxon era, travellers on main roads, which led to towns, ports and markets, were under the special protection of the king, so that a violent act committed on the king's road (as distinct from anywhere else) became an offence in its own right (*for-estel*). In the Assize of Clarendon (1166), Henry II asserted royal jurisdiction over the whole kingdom, thereby making *forestel* and the special protection of roads lose their legal distinctiveness. In the context of this generalization of royal jurisdiction emerged the 'pseudo-legal myth' of the king's four highways – public thoroughfares that still enjoyed special royal protection: the Fosse Way, Ermine Street, Watling Street and the Icknield Way.

The second formative moment Cooper notes is the emergence in the second half of the twelfth century of the legal doctrine of

purpresture, in which two hitherto distinct legal concepts start to coalesce: damage to the common good (as in obstructing or enclosing a public thoroughfare); and damage to royal property. In the context of purpresture, nuisance law takes shape, covering acts of omission or commission that injure public interest and that must be not only rectified but also punished.

Third, in the legal compilation of Bracton in the thirteenth century, the equation of royal and public interest is completed as the road becomes linked indissolubly to the protection of the Crown. Public roads extend throughout the realm, to ports, cities, markets and market towns, no longer limited to the 'king's four highways'. In this context, use defines the status of a road as public; if everyone uses a road in common then it is owned by no private person but is crown property and the king has jurisdiction over it. (It is worth noting the conservative bias of such custom, for it leaves no provision for planned construction of new public roads; the only public roads are ones already in use.) By reason of the public road becoming the inalienable property of the Crown, the taking of pavage tolls required royal permission.

Fourth and finally, the practical applications by Edward I of these legal principles, articulated most explicitly in Bracton, embedded the changed perception of the road in the material habits of its users. In the Statute of Winchester (1285), prescribed clearance of roadside woodland, which gave protection to robbers, enacted physically the notion that travellers had the right to expect protection, and that any landowner who neglected to ensure such protection would have to answer to officers of the Crown. In the jurist Britton (*c.* 1290), the assumption that so shapes late medieval attitudes to road maintenance is first articulated, namely, that – in the absence of a designated body or individual – everyone is ultimately responsible for the upkeep of a public road because everyone uses it. What was a public responsibility was also a right, and it is thus, Cooper concludes, that the perception arose and remains, namely, that customary use constitutes a right of way.

In 'When things break: mending roads, being social', Valerie Allen asks how the road – in being used, abused, legislated about and mended – becomes a social actor by directing travellers' thoughts and grounding their knowledge in a community traditionally defined exclusively by humans. In the first part of her chapter, she meditates on what brokenness entails. A 'broken' road sounds odd in modern idiom but the terminology is faithful to the Anglo-Saxon word for any kind of damage done to a

road, *stretbreche* (street-breaking), which included offences such as encroachment, diversion and destruction of the road's surface. The word 'break' has a broad and complex application, and, productively equivocal, affords reconfiguration and new grouping even as it refers to rupture within the system.

Secondly, Allen meditates on what passageway entails. Travellers on English roads in the later Middle Ages generally enjoyed customary right of way, a legal privilege that in theory distinguished between the right to pass and the obligation to stay on a dedicated strip of highway. In the open country, and before the period of wholesale land enclosure from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries onward, the theoretical distinction takes real form in the geographical evidence left of roads that form multiple parallel tracks. This relaxed attitude towards the location of a road makes for a more porous and flexible relation between road and adjacent land than modern highways will support. Most importantly, medieval roads are still comparatively innocent of anti-loitering laws, for strictures against dawdling can only flourish in conditions of intensified concern with speed and flow, which in turn emerge when roads are constrained on either side to single strips of thoroughfare. With decreased possibility of sidestepping, the need to maximize flow, minimize obstruction, segregate pedestrian from vehicular traffic, and to regularize surfaces all gain in importance. In the medieval period it is on urban streets that these preoccupations gradually intensify and it is in the specific context of enclosed streets that it becomes possible to speak of the emergence of civic consciousness. Being on the inside of a walled town fosters the identity of containment; daily traversing, cleaning and mending of a road make it the way of habitual thought itself.

Thirdly and finally, she meditates on the constituency of a community and the limits of sociality that emerge in the interventions and modifications necessary to maintain paved surfaces. Through the elision of the common good with sovereign interest (see Cooper above), the act of caring for the road fashions one as a member not only of the local community but also of the realm. In the solicitude for surfaces betokened by the entire business of pavage (from tolls to stone gathering) Allen explores the interaction of environment and human modification. The 'ideological' consciousness that emerges out of the manual labour of road care is less about worker solidarity than it is about the way thought organizes itself around and in relation to habitual actions and the shaped contours of an environment that acts as assertively as humans do.

In 'The word on the street: Chaucer and the regulation of nuisance in post-plague London', Sarah Rees Jones inquires into street-level politics in the later fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries. There is of course a long history of political philosophy originating in the theory of the Greek city state (*polis*), but Rees Jones argues for a model of the political as domestic economy (from Greek *oikos*, 'household'), inspired less by grand theory than by the mundanity of street maintenance. The household was conventionally the place where daily consumption was accommodated by the inhabitants' own production. The street, in contrast, was where surplus and deficit communed. In this anti-consumerist economic model, being 'at home' meant being self-sufficient in terms of daily need. Yet medieval mercantile reality, with its constant movement of staple commodities, belied this ideal of domestic self-reliance by blurring the distinction between daily and occasional need. Rees Jones examines that porous boundary between the public and private by means of a key architectural point of passage between street and home: the external windows of London's houses. Civic bye-laws required that windows giving access to private interiors should be set at a certain height, in order to protect rights of visual privacy that householders guarded jealously. Windows of the domestic frontage, however, that overlooked the street generally became larger and more elaborate in the fifteenth century, 'a legitimate and flaunted site of interaction' between domestic interior and civic exterior. Passage between these zones was inevitably a gendered matter. Although women might wield political influence from within the home and although the household was much more of a business entity than modern homes, domestic space was ultimately perceived as the natural place of the woman, while men tended to the common good on the street. In Chaucer's poem *Troilus and Criseyde*, which depicts ancient Troy in terms of contemporary London, Rees Jones notes the role the external windows of Criseyde's home play in her seduction. They also serve as access points for Troilus's recollections of her once the lovers are separated. Beyond their pragmatic architectural value, windows operate in the poem as psychological thresholds.

In contrast to those in Norwich, London's ward courts demonstrate a preoccupation with enforcement of nuisance law, possibly in reaction to the political turbulence of the city in the late fourteenth century. In his universalizing of London into a modernized Troy, Chaucer may therefore have been motivated by a similar kind of conservative impulse. In sum, the ward and

parish courts of Chaucer's London and its aftermath saw a gradual depoliticizing of its affairs into supervision of environmental hygiene while affairs of larger economic import were reserved for more elite, less representative bodies. Rees Jones nonetheless detects the mediation of popular political opinion through this discourse of moral and sanitary hygiene. London's nuisance law not only fashions the politics of neighbourliness through hygienic behaviours; it also registers a material concern for the built environment for its own sake.

Ruth Evans, in 'Getting there: wayfinding in the Middle Ages', poses a seemingly straightforward question that proves nonetheless hard to answer: how did travellers (of all stripes) find their way through terrain unknown to them? The question intrigues not least because it stands between two absences: on the one hand no systematic modern study of the topic and on the other no extensive documentation from the Middle Ages. Yet evidence hides in asides, throwaway comments and foreign phrase books that help assemble a picture of the medieval traveller as *homo cooperatus*, a figure that is linked to the local network of knowledge stored in documents, people, animals and the landscape and who is less solitary than the lack of discussion and documentation would suggest. Without over-romanticizing the good nature of the medieval public, the traveller could have some reasonable expectation of succour, for giving direction and shelter to him or her constituted an act of piety, one of the corporal acts of mercy (care of the stranger); as Michelle Sauer in the succeeding chapter demonstrates, bridge hermits also served in this capacity.

Visual lists on maps (the Gough map and the Hereford map, for example) show lines of major towns and cities that can act as stations and interim destinations in a longer itinerary. They suggest that a traveller can carry a general 'map' by rote, which nonetheless needs supplementation on the ground. Without timepiece or pedometer, medieval travellers could be expected to orient themselves by reference to the sky and landscape better than the average person today can, and they could in turn rely on a local populace intimately familiar with the furniture of the environment not least through communal events such as beating of bounds. Conventional measurement of space in terms of one, two and three days' journey bespeaks a regional knowledge shared by humans and the domestic animals that habitually trekked the routes. Musing on the 'silent army of messengers, letter-carriers, and servants' who, along with a host of folk on other business, traverse the medieval roads, Evans

argues for a 'hidden network' of fellow travellers, trained animals, local knowledge and active environment that accompany and mix their labour with the seemingly solitary wayfarer.

In 'The function of material and spiritual roads in the English eremitic tradition', Michelle M. Sauer considers the role played by road hermits in upkeep and service to the community. In contrast to life in the cloister or anchorhold, the hermit enjoyed relative freedom of movement, which facilitated the increase of road hermits in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, during which period the hermit emerges as a figure solitary yet not necessarily physically segregated, mobile yet a member of a grounded community. From their beginnings in early Christianity, hermits held a special relation with their nearby community as involved bystanders, and their contribution to the social whole involved a totality of both spiritual counsel and manual labour. More than a mere guard against idleness or an act of penance, manual labour has efficacy in its own right, offering material value to the community.

The elision of spiritual and bodily work had its impetus in the reform movements of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, and is exemplified in the French order of bridge friars, who built bridges, cared for travellers and controlled the connector roads to and from those bridges. Although England did not have an order dedicated as such to infrastructure, the Augustinian Canons Regular in particular sought to balance the contemplative with the active life. Praying of course was the conventional work of those who had taken religious vows, such work being spiritual rather than physical and yielding benefits beyond gratification of immediate need. Manual labour, on the other hand, involved bodily toil, served only bodily need and enacted the curse placed on Adam after the Fall. Its role in the life of a religious was not always a given. In the obligations of the road hermits, however, we see a valorization of manual labour, reflecting perhaps a larger cultural appreciation of labour's ethical value, especially in the wake of the mid-fourteenth-century Black Death. The true hermit embraces both the labour of the body and spiritual work; the vocabulary of hermits such as Richard Rolle elides both kinds of effort, active and contemplative. As scepticism regarding the validity of contemplation as work proper increases among late medieval and early modern ecclesiastical critics and reformists, the road hermit's practical involvement in public works secures his virtue and value. In the literal association of road and hermit, the concept

of spiritual life as a 'way' exceeds conventional metaphor. The very act of caring for the road the hermit travels on enacts his life choice to stick to the straight and narrow. Often establishing his hut at liminal places such as bridges and crossroads, the hermit offers a visible reminder of life as a spiritual road and thereby sanctifies the profane place of a trade route. In a society increasingly dependent on good quality roads yet without the capability of full state funding for their upkeep, the road hermit contributes important work to the local community, who carried the responsibility for maintenance.

Ruth Evans has questioned the apparent solitariness of the traveller, and this is especially the case when that traveller is a king. Michael Prestwich, in 'The royal itinerary and roads in England under Edward I', examines the personal travels of the king who contributed so much to the systematic maintenance of England's roads – Edward I. His Statute of Winchester (1285) required the land on either side of highways to be cleared of all growth that could give cover to robbers. Prestwich sets out to consider the material realities of and possible reasons for the king's constant itineraries. 'Constant' is no overstatement. In 1285 he stayed at about one hundred different places, and his longest sojourns were often required rather than chosen, as in parliamentary sessions, usually at Westminster. The king's royal predecessors were equally mobile, but their reasons appear to have differed. In the twelfth century, kings travelled in order to rule, yet with Edward's administration centralized in Westminster, judicial rule thoroughly distributed and his itinerary documents showing little evidence of interest in consultation with local officials, his wanderlust cannot be accounted for simply by administrative need. His presence at host towns and cities for the most part was an understated affair, but a few exceptional occasions of ceremony – English towns during the early years of his reign and Scottish towns during his campaigns – suggest the ideological importance of civic rituals of loyalty in uncertain times.

One public motive for some of his movements was military, with a number of campaigns led in France, Wales and the troubled Scottish front, fraught with rebellion. These episodes alone, however, do not explain a reign of weekly, sometimes daily travel, which seems to have been regularly motivated by religious observance in the form of pilgrimages (some of which of course were prompted by military concerns). Hunting, an important pursuit for an active king and his aristocratic retinue,

also in part explained his movements, especially early in his reign. Distances covered varied greatly, depending on quality of the road and terrain, size of entourage, urgency of the occasion, weather and season (Edward travelling in winter as well as summer); Prestwich notes daily distances covered of as much as thirty-six and as little as eleven miles. He further estimates the maximum size of the royal household to be about five hundred persons, although the king frequently travelled with a much smaller entourage. To some twenty horse-drawn, two-wheeled carts and oxen-drawn wagons for supplies, add another 150 persons (plus carts) for the queen's household on the occasions she travelled with him, as well as the crowd of followers (petitioners, the sick, the poor, prostitutes, peddlers, pickpockets, entertainers), and the cavalcade at full capacity could be massive. The many repeated visits to destinations show no fixed choice of road, suggesting that alternative, functional routes were routinely available. Furthermore, there is only scant evidence of advance bridge or road repair to accommodate the troupe. Water transport was also used by Edward, although it is likely that on such occasions some parts of his household would have travelled by road, converging at the destination. Perpetual motion was the norm and 'Edward had no real permanent base'. For him, kingship meant being on the move.

Shayne Aaron Legassie considers closely the case of 'The pilgrimage road in late medieval English literature', and finds it systematically double in nature: a historically real route physically indistinguishable from routes already in use for economic and administrative purposes; and a phenomenological route that for the pilgrim has exclusive meaning as the way of 'becoming what one is not yet'. It is, he posits, an ideological construct with material effects measured in inverse proportion to their questionable ontology. His emphasis is on the phenomenological status of the pilgrim road, how it is talked about and represented, whether as the venerable allegory for spiritual life or as the morally doubtful pretext to go on holiday. Either way, such representations are, suggests Legassie, what Michel Foucault would term 'heterotopic', in that these pilgrim roads are simultaneously real (in a way that 'ordinary' utopias are not) and ideal, marked off by ritual. The heterotopic road has the ability to make a pilgrim reassess behaviours and habits conducted in other spaces. This is demonstrated by the arresting instance when Margery Kempe has to bargain with her husband on the road to protect her chastity. Sexual assaults on

women on the road were all too routine, as was husbandly insistence on conjugal rights within the space of the home. Margery's narrative arrests, however, because of the unseemly inside-outness of the event, making visible what in other spaces seems ordinary (even if not desirable). In another example, the pilgrim road in the *Stanzaic Guy of Warwick* functions heterotopically by sublimating into an idealized chivalry the realpolitik that, at court itself, cannot be avoided.

In the second half of his chapter, Legassie borrows the term 'chronotope' from Mikhail Bakhtin to explain how medieval romance connects time and space, accelerating or decelerating time as narrative constraint demands. In Chrétien de Troyes's *The Knight of the Cart*, news has the ability to travel instantaneously, as if the road were itself a high-speed information cable. Legassie's analysis at this particular point bears close comparison with that of Christine Chism in the following chapter because for both writers the capacity to de- and re-materialize experience on the road is central to chivalric romance as genre. Legassie concludes that the medieval pilgrim road lies between the material (historical, archaeological, literal) and the phenomenological (ideological, allegorical, symbolic). An artefact, it is also a thought-scape, allowing the traveller on it to experience a 'time-outside-life' and offering at least the possibility of reaching an accommodation between his or her disparate, even conflicting, identities.

Like Legassie, Christine Chism considers the relationship between roads and romance, and in 'The romance of the road in *Athelston* and two late medieval Robin Hood ballads' she pays special attention to how they can variously build nations (as in *Athelston*) and interrupt authority (as in the ballads). Chism's analysis addresses a central paradox of romance roads: on the one hand the genre conventionally interests itself in trackless wastes more than in the material realities of thoroughfares; on the other the genre is absorbed in movement, borders and imagined history. She locates an early moment of that imagined history in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, where the paradoxical aspect of roads inscribes itself: in Geoffrey's text (what Alan Cooper calls the fiction of) the doctrine of the king's four highways 'weds ideology to landscape', with the great roads bringing territory and inhabitant into orderly subjection; yet roads in Geoffrey's narrative also bring the promise of freedom and new starts. Roads bear the double sign of rule and release, and that doubleness is played out in the *Athelston*/Robin Hood

ballads diptych: where in *Athelston* roads constitute the connective tissue of sovereignty, in the ballads they serve more to disintegrate national totalities into more local and fluid gatherings. In *Athelston* the road materializes the chivalric ideal of friendship, enshrined in sworn brotherhood between four men, and maps a network of connections made palpable by Athelston the messenger. His itineraries rather than human characters are in many ways the poem's main actor, his most epic journey being the one-day, fifty-mile ride from Westminster to Canterbury, the speed so furious to save the life of a brother, although the effort cost the life of Athelston's horse.

Beyond providence, legal process, the commons and trusted counsellors, roads hold the realm in a network of connection when the king's blinded judgement threatens to sunder it. For Chism, the road marks historical time and measures friendship in footsteps, yet one of the brothers remains trapped in chivalric abstraction, 'ignorant of material', of how friendship must be slogged out on the road. Polity, Chism concludes, is wider than the blue blood of male privilege. In contrast to *Athelston*, the Robin Hood ballads' sense of place is often imprecise, yet the road – without designating any particular stretch – remains dramatically present. In a politicized world of sovereign justice and the exercise of law for its own sake rather than for that of community, roads enable possible redirection even as they enact sovereign power. They afford Robin a vantage point from which to watch and intervene to redistribute wealth without bloodshed. He offers a hint, but only a hint, of the freedom that roads promise in the brutal context of sovereign law and the rebel violence it carries as its shadow.

In the final three chapters, we consider transport routes not strictly defined as English roads but nonetheless essential in understanding them as part of a larger system: waterways; roads in the Welsh marches; and roads in the Scottish marches. In 'London: the hub of an English river transport network, 1250–1550', Claire A. Martin demonstrates the vital importance of water transportation within the island during the late medieval period, and not simply for the city of London. In fact, it outstrips land travel as a concept of mass transportation in so far as its ferries with their fare schedules are the first to offer something approaching a public service. Rather, however, than emerging out of some kind of public-minded vision of a travel service available to all, the reasons for the service appear to lie in

the regulation procedures needed to compensate for the physical dangers posed by water travel, which left goods vulnerable to damage and passengers to being robbed or drowned. Such regulations extend to the size and safety of boats, and to the experience of the boatmen.

Landlocked areas aside, populated regions throughout the country routinely preferred water travel over land travel under two key conditions: the transport of heavy, bulky and low-value goods such as stone, timber or grain; and when speed was not a necessity (estimates drawn from contemporary itineraries suggesting water travel to be only moderately faster than walking). Water travel was also cheaper than land travel, possibly as little as half the cost, imposing perhaps a third key condition on some travellers. Waterways generally increased the industrial value of a region, which tended to be developed earlier than landlocked regions. The impact of waterways upon urban life was profound, determining topography, language and consciousness: topography, in the way water-associated trades became denser along waterways; language, in the evidence of street and wharf names; and consciousness in the rituals of neighbourly etiquette that had to be observed or in social problems when etiquette was violated by nuisance actions such as the obstruction of traffic owing to stacked logs in the street.

In 'Conquest, roads and resistance in medieval Wales', Dylan Foster Evans challenges popular assumptions about the parlous state of Welsh roads in the Middle Ages, and in doing so raises the question of road technology and road function. For Henry II, leading English forces through enemy terrain, Welsh roads were definitely not up to the mark, but for more compactly kitted travellers and for Welsh fighters, who synchronized their movements with the forested and mountainous landscape, they were perfectly functional. A road that an Englishman might call impossible (for wheeled carriage) could be fully serviceable for horse and pedestrian. Like England, Wales inherited a legacy of Roman roads, and the long route running west along the south coast from Caerleon to Carmarthen, then north to the Conway valley, and then east to Chester, has clear ideological import in encompassing almost the whole of Wales.

Foster Evans also qualifies the overstated assumption that the period oversaw no building of new roads. Terrace-type routes cut into the sides of slopes show evidence of engineering skills in peace time, while the systematic levelling of forests and building

of roads by English armies subsequent to Henry II's losses and throughout the thirteenth century testify to the efficacy of hostile intent. One could say that Edward I mastered the Welsh by having first mastered the Welsh landscape. Where nowadays it is common enough for brand new roads to be built through levelled landscape for the purpose of urban and suburban planning, such wholesale construction was rare enough in the medieval period and in this instance unmistakably motivated by military conquest and expansion. The scale of the engineering operation was epic, and it is telling that instead of road breadth being measured in terms of single- or double-width carts (as it usually was) these military access routes were calibrated in terms of the span of an arrow's flight.

Having emphasized the extent of active road building in medieval Wales, Foster Evans proceeds to consider the interrelation between landscape and thought. The impact on the Welsh woodland was quickly registered by the local poets, who made of the felled oaks something like the objective correlative Chism speaks of in her chapter. These poets are themselves one of the main groups of travellers in the late Middle Ages, moving amongst the gentry, exchanging songs for hospitality. Their knowledge of the landscape and of the effect of English conquest on it will have been immediate. In their most politicized analogies, as the tree falls, so does the autonomy of a leader; as a tree turns into timber and a tool, so a free Welsh man with the right to fight turns into a serf, for woodland (as opposed to the open battlefield) had long been associated with Welsh military prowess. Yet over the decades as forests silently grew back and as woodland (especially in the poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym) acquired associations with love and courtliness, roads – already a powerful element in the Welsh imaginary – mark more than conquest and loss, and make peace with the landscape, integrating human community with environment.

We conclude the collection with Richard Oram's chapter, 'Trackless, impenetrable and underdeveloped? Roads, colonization and environmental transformation in the Anglo-Scottish border zone, *c.* 1100 to *c.* 1300', in which he considers the road as a strategic point of interaction between human and environment. Oram begins with a review of the pre-medieval period, in which Iron Age Britain appears to have had only a rudimentary network of communication, ordered in an ad hoc manner to local rather than regional or national connection. The Roman system contrasted

with that situation in the clear evidence it shows of planned engineering. Beyond simply functioning as the vectors of conquest and empire building, however, such roads have demographic consequences, defining possession, connecting, dividing and redistributing social groups.

One example of this is how the north end of Watling Street contoured the boundary of the Danelaw in the ninth century. Such occasions constitute more than serendipitous use of thoroughfares that are already conveniently to hand, for Oram argues that the physique of the road also accounted for its political importance. Some roads simply fall in with the given contours of the environment but Roman roads raised the carriageway above ground level by building on a constructed agger. The cleared space of parallel ditches on either side of the carriageway broadened its presence in the environment, creating a 'parking zone' as well as a place clear of brigands. Even as it thus frames political space, the road itself stands apart from that space, a kind of no man's land that both is and is not a part of the landscape.

In the Anglo-Scottish regions, where Roman roads are sparser than in the south, evidence for the use of roads as boundaries is more circumstantial. The Antonine Wall and Hadrian's Wall to its south were evident dividers, with Carlisle and Corbridge key nodal points along the latter's network of roads. If these big routes convey and connect, they can just as easily form division lines, routes of fragmentation and segregation of localities, showing how kingdoms can be unmade as much as made by a road. Just as roads helped construct the northern kingdom of Northumbria so they later helped to dismantle it, facilitating Scandinavian invaders and Scottish absorption of the northern end of Dere Street. The division of the Northumbrian kingdom into Scottish and English parts cut across thoroughfares of connection that originally were not so separated. The area between the Humber and the Forth was a stretch of dynamic settlement from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, which came at some cost to the environment, with consequent decline of large-scale forest, intensive management of scrub species such as willow, hazel and alder, and a general overuse of resources as settlement became denser. By 1300, the Humber to Forth region had become easily traversable and heavily populated, meaning a massive change to a hitherto undeveloped environment. The importation of Scandinavian timber was an ironic comment on the changes wrought to the environment in the name of settlement.

Notes

- 1 G. H. Martin, 'Road travel in the Middle Ages', *Journal of Transport History*, n.s. 3 (1975–6), 159–78 (172).
- 2 Jacques Derrida, 'Freud and the scene of writing', in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 246–91 (p. 269).
- 3 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 107.
- 4 Derrida, 'Freud and the scene of writing', pp. 268–9.
- 5 See further Eddie Christie, 'Writing in wax, writing in water', in Martin Foy and Jen Boyle (eds), *Becoming-Media, postmedieval*, 3:1 (2012), 27–45.
- 6 Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 107–8.
- 7 *OED road* (n.) III.4.a, b as well as the note on the etymology of 'road'.
- 8 *MED rode* (n.3). For the span of dates in English, see *OED road*, n.
- 9 *OED road* (n.), 'Etymology'; see also Thorlac Turville-Petre, 'The etymology of road', *Notes & Queries*, 55:4 (2008), 405–6.
- 10 Della Hooke, *The Anglo-Saxon Landscape: The Kingdom of the Hwicce* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 145–9, discusses the frequent occurrence of the word *stræt* in Old English charters to refer to a surfaced route, and of the words *weg*, *lane* and *stig* (sty) to refer to unsurfaced routes.
- 11 Deriving from Old French *alée*, an *alei* is 'an open passage between buildings, an alley' (*MED alei(e)* [n.] 2a), but it is also a path or walk (as in a garden or park). A *path* is 'A narrow passageway or route across land; a track worn by the feet of travellers or animals as opposed to an established road; a footpath, lane, by-way' (*MED path* [n.] 1a).
- 12 A *bi-path* is 'A byway (as distinct from a main road or a public highway); a private, little known, or secret path; (b) a shortcut' (*MED bi-path* [n.] 1a,b).
- 13 An Old English word, *wei* is ubiquitous in Old and Middle English, with general application, and appearing alone and in compounds (*MED wei* [n.1]).
- 14 For an instructive differentiation between *bi-path* and *hyghe waye*, see the fifteenth-century *Myroure of Oure Ladye Containing a Devotional Treatise on Divine Service, with a Translation of the Offices Used by the Sisters of the Brigittine Monastery of Sion, at Isleworth, During the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, ed. John Henry Blunt, Early English Text Society, extra series (EETS es) 19 (London: Oxford University Press, 1873), p. 140: 'There ys a dyfference bytwyxe an hyghe waye and a bypathe, for the hyghe waye ys large and commune to all. By the bypathe is vnderstonde the counsayles that longe to relygyous.'
- 15 A *causey* is 'A road formed on a "causey" or mound; a raised road across a low or wet place, or piece of water; formerly also applied to

- a mole or landing-pier running into the sea or a river' (*OED causeway* [n.] 1). According to the fifteenth-century prose *Merlin*, it is surfaced with limestone: 'A-bove this marasse was a chauchie [causey] ... of the breede of a spere lengthe made of chalke and sande' (*Merlin, or The Early History of King Arthur: A Prose Romance*, ed. Henry B. Wheatley, 2 vols, vol. 1, Early English Text Society, original series (EETS os) 21 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1899), p. 604). The *OED* defines *causey* (n.) 2a as 'A raised way formed on a mound, across a hollow, *esp.* low wet ground, a bog, marsh, lake, arm of the sea, etc.; a raised footway by the side of a carriage road liable to be submerged in wet weather. More fully called *causeyway*, now *causeway*, *n.* *causey* being now less used.'
- 16 The modern word 'fare' is largely restricted to the cost of a journey (*OED fare* [n.1] I.4a,b). Middle English *fare* has many applications, including that of 'a way of passage; a road, track, path' (*MED fare* [n.1] 2a).
 - 17 Meaning a road or passageway, as in Chaucer's well-known line from *The Knight's Tale*, 'This world nys but a thurghfare ful of wo' (I.2847), the word in Middle English also means a town on a route or way station (*MED thurgh-fare* [n.] a,b). In modern usage, the senses of passage and way through or right of way have merged (*OED thoroughfare* [n.] 1a).
 - 18 Apart from its meaning (still current) of a valve or door, Middle English *gate* is a synonym, mostly northern, for *wey* or *street* (*MED gate* [n.2]).
 - 19 Apart from being 'a narrow way between walls or houses in towns', a *lane* can also refer to a watercourse or channel for a stream. The phrase *by strete and lane*, attested in the fifteenth century and referring to major and minor roads, means much the same thing as our modern 'highways and byways' (*MED lane* [n.] a, c).
 - 20 Deriving from insular French *passage*, the Middle English word, like the modern, refers among other meanings to a path or narrow route, with the sense of being constrained on either side (*MED passage* [n.] 3a) (*OED passage* [n.] II.11a).
 - 21 Deriving from insular French *route*, Middle English *route* has a similar meaning to contemporary 'route' and appears in its earliest form as *rute* (*MED route* [n.2] a).
 - 22 For the application of the word, see discussion above. Middle English *strete* is an Old English word (*street*) but ultimately derives from Latin *strata*.
 - 23 Some road terms are geographically specific: a *wynd*, which is 'A narrow street or passage turning off from a main thoroughfare; a narrow cross-street; a lane or alley' (*OED wynd* [n.] a), is chiefly Scottish. The first recorded entry is in Andrew of Wyntoun's *Original Chronicle* (c. 1425): 'Ðai til Edynburgh helde þe way, / And at þe Freyr Wynde enteryt

- pai' (in *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, ed. F. J. Amours, 6 vols, vol. 6, Scottish Text Society 57 (Blackwood: Edinburgh and London, 1906), p. 53.
- 24 *A venelle* (from insular French *venelle*) is 'a narrow road, lane' (*MED venelle* [n.] b); the only witness is *The English Register of Godstow Nunnery* (c. 1450): 'The venelle (anglice, a lane) ... ledith to the Backehowse' (*The English Register of Godstow Nunnery, near Oxford*, ed. Andrew Clark, EETS os 129–30 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1905–6)). Even if the usage here is insular French, it still attests to a word in usage in the fifteenth century.
 - 25 This section is modified slightly from its earlier appearance in Valerie Allen, 'Road', in Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Lowell Duckert (eds), *Ecomaterialism, postmedieval*, 4:1 (2013), 18–29.
 - 26 B. P. Hindle, *Medieval Roads*, 2nd edn (Princes Risborough: Shire, 1989), p. 6.
 - 27 S. Webb and B. Webb, *English Local Government*, vol. 5: *The Story of the King's Highway* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1913), p. 5.
 - 28 Sir Frederick Pollock and Frederick William Maitland, *The History of English Law before the Time of Edward I*, 2 vols, vol. 2, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968 [1898]), pp. 145–6.
 - 29 Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law*, vol. 2, p. 146.
 - 30 William Hawkins, *A Treatise of the Pleas of the Crown*, 2 vols, vol. 1, 3rd edn (London: E. and R. Nutt and R. Gosling, 1739), p. 201.
 - 31 Oliver Rackham, *The History of the Countryside* (London: J. M. Dent, 1986), p. 170.
 - 32 Hindle, *Medieval Roads*, p. 21.
 - 33 Lorraine Attreed, 'Urban identity in medieval English towns', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 32:4 (2002), 571–92 (585–8) for dispute between the citizens of York and the Minster's vicars choral over pasturing rights in the Vicars' Lees field.
 - 34 *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Sanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen, EETS os 212 (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 23.
 - 35 Margaret Harvey, 'Travel from Durham to York (and back) in the fourteenth century', *Northern History*, 42:1 (2005), 119–30 (121).
 - 36 *Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 24.
 - 37 *Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 101.
 - 38 *Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 101. On one occasion, while taking part in a Holy Thursday procession, Kempe has a vision of Christ taking leave of his mother, the apostles and Mary Magdalen; she is so overcome that 'sche fel down in þe feld a-mong þe pepil': *Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 174.
 - 39 Webb and Webb, *English Local Government*, p. 11.

- 40 F. J. C. Hearnshaw, *Leet Jurisdiction in England Especially as Illustrated by the Records of the Court Leet of Southampton* (Southampton: Cox & Sharland, 1907), p. 319.
- 41 G. T. Salusbury-Jones, *Street-Life in Medieval England*, 2nd edn (Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester, and Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1975), p. 64.
- 42 T. P. Cooper, 'The mediaeval highways, streets, open ditches, and sanitary conditions of the City of York', *Archaeological Journal*, 22 (1912–13), 270–86 (278).
- 43 See F. M. Stenton, 'The road system of medieval England', *The Economic History Review*, 7:1 (1936), 1–21; Salusbury-Jones, *Street-Life in Medieval England*; Ivan Donald Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, 3rd edn (London: John Baker, 1973); Hugh Davies, *Roman Roads in Britain* (Oxford: Shire, 2011).
- 44 Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, p. 504.
- 45 Davies, *Roman Roads in Britain*, p. 13.
- 46 Stenton, 'The road system of medieval England', 1.
- 47 Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, p. 18.
- 48 For groma, see J. B. Harley and David Woodward (eds), *History of Cartography*, vol. 1: *Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 213–14.
- 49 Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, p. 22.
- 50 *The 'Coutumes de Beauvaisis' of Philippe de Beaumanoir*, trans. F. R. P. Akehurst (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), p. 264.
- 51 *The 'Coutumes de Beauvaisis' of Philippe de Beaumanoir*, p. 264.
- 52 Davies, *Roman Roads in Britain*, p. 43.
- 53 Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, pp. 51–2, 55–6, 170–88, 289–96; Davies, *Roman Roads in Britain*, pp. 14–15.
- 54 Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, pp. 28, 318–23; Davies, *Roman Roads in Britain*, pp. 44–6.
- 55 Davies, *Roman Roads in Britain*, pp. 15–16; Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, pp. 194–213, 224–42.
- 56 Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, p. 28.
- 57 Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, pp. 123–7, 141–55, 213–24; Davies, *Roman Roads in Britain*, p. 16.
- 58 Davies, *Roman Roads in Britain*, p. 17. Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, pp. 445–8.
- 59 Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, pp. 427–42; Davies, *Roman Roads in Britain*, p. 17.
- 60 Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, p. 23.
- 61 G. B. Grundy, 'The evidence of Saxon land charters on the ancient road-system of Britain', *Archaeological Journal*, 74 (1917), 79–105 (85).

- 62 Valerie Allen, 'The pencil, the pin, the table, the bowl and the wheel', in Eileen A. Joy and Craig Dionne (eds), *When Did We Become Post/Human?*, *postmedieval*, 1:1 (2010), 10–17, esp. 14–16.
- 63 Alan Cooper, 'The king's four highways: legal fiction meets fictional law', *Journal of Medieval History*, 26:4 (2000), 351–70.
- 64 Cooper, 'The king's four highways', 353; for the distinction between the Icknield Way and the Ryknield Way see Cooper's map on 356.
- 65 Cooper, 'The king's four highways', 352.
- 66 H. Poole and J. P. Gilson (eds), *Four Maps of Great Britain Designed by Matthew Paris about A.D. 1250* (London: British Museum, 1928); E. J. S. Parsons (ed.), *The Map of Great Britain circa A.D. 1360 Known as The Gough Map* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958).

Sources for the English medieval road system

Paul Hindle

Introduction

The medieval period in England up to the start of the fourteenth century saw a massive growth in all sections of economic life: population increased, towns grew, industry blossomed and trade, which was both a cause and an effect of this growth, became vitally important. Not only was agricultural produce such as grain and wool moved from field to market but also such diverse items as stone, metal, wood, woollen cloth and a whole range of industrial products needed transporting. Although relatively few people needed to travel, it was vitally important for the whole economy that it was possible for both people and produce to travel easily when required. For goods, there were clearly two alternatives: they could travel by boat or by road. Bulky produce in particular tended to be moved by river or by sea, but many parts of England and Wales did not have this option, as they were either not near navigable rivers (for example Buckingham, Coventry, Leicester, Lichfield, Ludlow or Northampton) or had rivers that were obstructed by low bridges, weirs or fish traps.

Thus roads must have formed the backbone of the transport system between towns and villages.¹ And yet it is curious that so little has been written about these roads that were so fundamental to England's economic growth. Early modern writers on this topic largely confined themselves to looking at travellers, road maintenance, the means and safety of travel and the state of the roads.² There was little or no attempt to see *where* the roads were, that is, to view the roads as a network. The reason for this is probably the lack of information available, for few new roads were constructed during the medieval period, and it is very difficult to ascribe a date to a road that was not actually built, but which just came into use from habitual lines of travel. There was already a road system in

existence, at least 10,000 miles of Roman roads, built mainly by CE 150, but which had not been maintained for well over 600 years by the time of the Norman Conquest; many of these roads clearly remained in use, providing a basic network. But many of the new towns of medieval England, such as Oxford, Coventry or Plymouth, were not on Roman roads and so new roads must have been needed to serve them, as well as the many villages in between.

The nature of these new medieval roads differed from that of Roman or modern roads; essentially the road was not a physical entity. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, writing in 1913, said that 'The King's Highway ... was not a strip of land ... but a legal and customary right ... What existed, in fact, was not a road, but what we might almost term an easement – a right of way, enjoyed by the public at large from village to village, along a certain customary course, which, if much frequented, became a physical track.'³ If the road was obstructed or had become founderous in wet weather, then the traveller had the right to diverge from the road, even if that entailed trampling crops.⁴ Where the road had to climb a hill or bank then multiple tracks might develop, the traveller taking the easiest route available at the time. Most of the surviving lengths of medieval roads come in this category, where roads left cultivated land and the tracks have thus not been ploughed out or otherwise destroyed.⁵

C. T. Flower's two volumes of *Public Works in Medieval Law* (1915 and 1923) have a rich collection of contemporary accounts of the maintenance of bridges, ditches and rivers as well as roads. He coined the memorable phrase that 'the King's Highway made and maintained itself',⁶ and noted that there was no legal distinction between a king's highway (*via regia*) and a common road (*via communis*). The first article to attempt to study the road network (by Sir Frank Stenton) was not published until 1936.⁷

A few new roads were built; for example, in 1278 Roger Mortimer was charged by Edward I to enlarge and widen the roads and passes into parts of North Wales, in connection with the campaigns against the Welsh.⁸ The three causeways connecting Ely with the rest of England across the fenlands are perhaps the largest medieval road-building works, probably begun in the twelfth century.⁹

Several royal statutes of various dates made requirements about the width of roads and of the land to be cleared on either side – but often more in the interests of safety from outlaws than of improving the roads. Perhaps the most famous is in Edward I's Statute

of Winchester in 1285: 'It is commanded that highways from one market town to another be widened ... so that there be no ditch, tree or bush, where a man can lurk to do mischief, within two hundred feet on either side of the road.' The four great highways (Watling Street, Ermine Street, Fosse Way and Icknield Way) were always regarded as being under the king's special protection,¹⁰ which supports the idea that many Roman roads remained in use in the medieval period.

The greatest problem in attempting to trace medieval roads is that if they are no longer in use, then, not having been engineered, they are likely to have disappeared. On the other hand, if they have remained in use they will have had a more modern road constructed on top, burying or destroying any archaeological evidence of the medieval road. In order to trace medieval roads, therefore, one must begin in the library rather than in the field. There is documentary and map evidence that can suggest which Roman roads remained in use and where medieval roads came into use. All this evidence will help to link together the widely scattered and difficult-to-date archaeological remains. Virtually the only way to confirm field evidence of a medieval road is to demonstrate from the historical record that it was in use during that period. A medieval road may have originally come into use in pre-Roman, Roman, Saxon or medieval times, but it is important to have evidence for its use in the medieval period; when it first came into being is of little importance.

Documentary evidence

Documentary evidence is sparse and often of a negative kind, such as the references to impassable roads in court cases. Roads or their ditches were frequently blocked; for example, in 1357 the Fosse Way was obstructed with trenches, piles and trees at Belgrave (Leicestershire).¹¹ In 1386 the Abbot of Chertsey allowed two 'wells' twelve feet wide and eight feet deep to exist in the high road from Egham to Staines; an unknown man had drowned and the abbot had claimed his goods!¹² Local enterprise in Norfolk must have been somewhat discouraged when a man was fined for building a new road from Yarmouth to Winterton to replace one blocked with sand.¹³

The scattered references to roads in medieval documents are important in that these specific roads are thus known to have been in use; for example, Holm Cultram Abbey (Cumbria) had a

right of way 'by the ordinary road through Bassenthwaite' from 1290 to 1327.¹⁴ The Roman road from Kendal to Shap is referred to at various times during the medieval period as *magna strata* (great street), *magna via* (great way) and *stayngate* (paved road).¹⁵ In 1354 Bishop Welton promised forty days of remitted penance for anyone working on a boggy stretch of road between Carlisle and Penrith (bridges are more commonly the subject of such an indulgence).¹⁶ An inquest in Suffolk in 1364 requested the Lord of Bildeston to clean two ditches on a road,¹⁷ and in 1285 Edward I wrote to the Prior of Dunstable ordering him to repair the high roads through Dunstable (probably Watling Street and the Icknield Way):

Because we have learnt that the high roads, which stretch through the middle of your vill aforesaid, are so broken up and deep by the frequent passage of carts, that dangerous injuries continuously threaten those passing by those roads: we wishing to be guarded against such injuries, which by that fault will be able to happen in the future unless the remedy be more speedily applied, command you that you, that is to say, each one of you according to his estate and capabilities, shall cause those roads to be filled in and mended, as in such case it has been accustomed to be done in times past. So that for default of you in this part it shall not be necessary for us to apply a heavier hand to this.¹⁸

The movement of bulky produce has left few records, and it was only when the government became involved with such trade that some records have survived. In particular, records were kept for the provisioning of the kings' armies; the accounts give details of the goods bought or requisitioned and the type of transport used to take the goods to the customs ports for shipment to Wales, Scotland or France. The best surviving records are the purveyance accounts for Lincolnshire and Yorkshire; here goods were moved to progressively larger centres, eventually by river – it should be remembered that these two counties are well served by rivers, which does not apply to many parts of England.¹⁹ Records also survive for the various Cistercian monasteries that moved their wool to distant ports chiefly by packhorse or cart. Such long hauls as those from Furness Abbey (Cumbria) to Beverley (East Yorkshire), Holm Cultram (Cumbria) to Newcastle upon Tyne, and Vale Royal (Cheshire) to London or Boston (Lincolnshire) suggest that these long distances were not unduly difficult; the detailed routes, however, are not known.

Place names

Certain types of trade on the road led to some roads being given special names, such as Maltway, Oxdrove, Sheepdrove and Saltway. These roads were not specifically constructed for these uses but were named after the type of traffic that often used them. The roads leading from the inland salt towns ('wiches'), including Droitwich, Nantwich, Middlewich and Northwich, can be partially traced by 'salt' place names such as Saltersford and Saltersgate.

A portway led to a particular port or market town; these were usually older tracks or Roman roads being used again. A well-known portway led from Northampton to Southampton via Oxford. Another example is the Roman road from Silchester to Old Sarum (Salisbury); it is no longer a through route, and its use near the abandoned Roman town of Silchester must have ceased early in Saxon times. In Derbyshire, there are several portways; one can be traced from Nottingham to Wirksworth and Bakewell by a succession of documentary references and place names.²⁰

A road thought to have been used by the army was known as a *herepath* (army road). A good example is the Salisbury Way, leading from Shaftesbury via White Sheet Hill to Salisbury. Its origins are probably prehistoric, but it is mentioned as a *herepath* and a boundary in the Anglo-Saxon period, it was used as a drove road and eventually it became part of the main coach road to the west from Salisbury; it is now a quiet green lane (Figure 2.1). The Wiltshire Herepath is another well-preserved trackway that runs from Marlborough to Avebury over Fyfield Down; it too was used until the eighteenth century as a coach road.

Other place-name elements can give clues to old routes; *way* is probably the commonest, but *stretten*, *heol*, *fford* and *gate* can all refer to a road, coming from Latin, Welsh, Welsh and Danish respectively. Any word having a connection with roads derived from any of these languages can suggest the line of a former road. Drove roads also tend to have associated place names and inn names referring to the animals being driven (Ox, Bull), where they had come from (Scottish, Welsh) or where they paid to rest overnight (such as Half Penny Field). Roads leading to and from monasteries might attract names such as Abbey Road, Pilgrim's Ford, Monk's Way, Pilgrim's Way or Abbot's Way.

Place-name evidence can be found in documents whether medieval or more recent, and crucially in the large-scale mapping done by the Ordnance Survey²¹ (at 6 in and 25 in scales), which took place from the 1840s.



Figure 2.1 The Salisbury Way seen as a holloway ascending White Sheet Hill, Wiltshire.

Itineraries

The various itineraries compiled by historians for the medieval period provide evidence of the movement of individual people, and, by implication, of the physical existence of roads. There is, for example, the itinerary of Giraldus Cambrensis (Gerald of Wales), who toured Wales in 1188, and a few bishops' itineraries survive from the mid-thirteenth century onwards, though detail is usually lacking. Occasionally, records of the movements of private individuals were kept; one of the best known is the route recorded by Robert of Nottingham, who was buying wheat for the king in 1324–5 in the area around the River Trent.²² Some journeys of the warden and fellows of Merton College, Oxford were recorded, and published in a wide-ranging article by G. H. Martin.²³ A particularly interesting itinerary is a list of routes from the Premonstratensian abbey of Titchfield in Hampshire to each of the other houses of the same order of canons, as far distant as Alnwick and Shap, passing through many major towns en route.²⁴ The manuscript dates from about 1400 and complements the routes depicted on the well-known fourteenth-century Gough map.²⁵

The most complete itineraries, however, are those compiled by historians since the 1820s for the kings, who visited a wide range of places, including castles, manors, abbeys or market towns. These itineraries, which were compiled from letters the kings wrote, charters they granted or simply from the details of their household accounts, are the most useful; from the time of King John onwards we have an almost complete daily record of each king's whereabouts. The baggage train, made up of ten to twenty carts and wagons in the time of King John (1199–1216), contained everything from the treasury to the king's wardrobe, and had to move about with the king; it must have required adequate roads. More than that, the entire court was itinerant and constantly moved with the king, until at least the reign of Edward I (1272–1307) when the exchequer and chancery became established at Westminster; despite that the kings continued to travel. The very detailed itinerary for Edward II (1307–27) shows that the Privy Seal and wardrobe still travelled with the king. England is fortunate in having such detailed state records from such an early date. Some problems arise in the interpretation of these itineraries, principally where information is lacking, but once the routes are plotted on a map it is reasonable to suppose that if a king (and his court) used certain routes frequently, then some reasonable track or road must have existed.

The itinerary of King John was the first to be published.²⁶ He was noted even in his own time as a great traveller; he carried his scrutiny into the far north and west where kings seldom went – indeed his visit to Carlisle in February 1201 was the first time that any king had been to that area since William II took the land from the Scots in 1092. John was probably too efficient an administrator for his time, and although many state records start during his reign and we can therefore trace his movements accurately, this unwanted efficiency no doubt caused resentment from the barons and helped his ultimate downfall. Sometimes there are gaps in his itinerary, such as on his second visit to Carlisle in 1206, when he is last recorded in the city on 20 February and next appears in Chester on 1 March. It is impossible to say which route he took; he may have gone along the Cumbrian coast, or via Penrith and Kendal, though he could equally well have gone by sea! Happily there are few gaps of this magnitude.

The itinerary of Edward I shows twice as many journeys as that for John; in particular he travelled to Wales and Scotland on military expeditions.²⁷ Perhaps the most curious aspect of his travels is how little he used the same routes, suggesting that cross-country travel presented few problems. His itinerary is shown in [Figure 2.2](#).

Edward II also covered very few routes more than twice.²⁸ However, his route to the north stands out clearly: it ran along Watling Street to Kings Langley and Stony Stratford and then proceeded through Northampton, Leicester, Nottingham, Doncaster, Pontefract, York, Northallerton, Darlington, Durham and Newcastle to Berwick. In addition Edward seems to have travelled by boat on the rivers Trent and the Ouse; he could equally have used the Thames, but his mode of transport is impossible to ascertain from the itinerary. Overall the kings travelled mostly in central and southern England, avoiding the north-west, the south-west and Wales (apart from Edward I). They also avoided East Anglia, an area of great economic importance; perhaps the later monarchs remembered the loss of King John's baggage train in the silt of the Wash after leaving King's Lynn in October 1216.

Map evidence

If the archaeological and documentary evidence is poor and uneven, we are fortunate in having several medieval maps showing roads on a national scale. Matthew Paris, a monk at St Albans, drew four

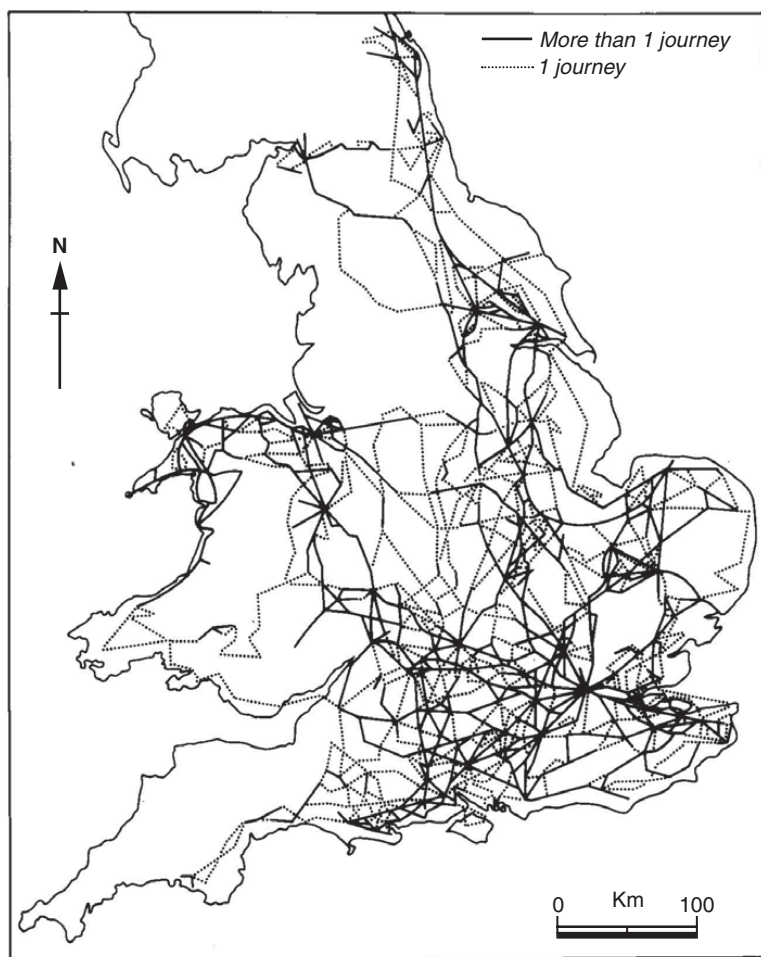


Figure 2.2 The itinerary of Edward I showing all the routes travelled during his reign.

similar maps of Britain in about 1250, which are based on an itinerary from Dover to Newcastle.²⁹ The route forms the backbone of the maps and goes by way of Canterbury, Rochester, London, St Albans, Dunstable, Northampton, Leicester, Belvoir (a cell of St Albans), Newark, Blyth, Doncaster, Pontefract, Boroughbridge, Northallerton and Durham. On one map the route continues north to Berwick, whilst on another the route has Leicester on a branch route, the main route going via Stamford. Only on one map, which



Figure 2.3 The north-west of England from Carlisle to Lancaster as depicted on the Gough map.

is just an unfinished sketch, are the towns actually connected by lines. Paris probably derived the route from a written itinerary and tried to fill in the rest of the country around it. The maps are crude and must be used with caution – a legend on one disarmingly states that the island would have been elongated if the page size had been larger!

Much better evidence for the road system is to be found on the Gough map of about 1360, which depicts some 2,940 miles of roads covering most of England; Cumbria is shown in [Figure 2.3](#).³⁰ It is not known who drew the map; it is named after the antiquarian Richard Gough, who first described it in 1780. The interpretation of this map is made difficult because neither its purpose nor its sources is known, but it was probably an official compilation for government use, perhaps amended for use in certain areas – for example, the extant copy has networks of local roads in south-east Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. Distances are given between most towns, probably in Old French miles (about $1\frac{1}{4}$ statute miles), and almost 40 per cent of the routes shown are along the line of Roman roads.

The map omits several well-known roads such as those from London to Dover and York to Newcastle, although it does show the towns en route correctly. Viewing the map as a whole, the sheer number of towns shown would enable the traveller to plan a journey, even if an actual route was not shown. Many places are included only because they were stages between larger towns. Overall the criteria for the choice of towns shown on the map remain a mystery. The roads do, however, reflect the centralization of government, for there is clearly a national road system radiating from London, despite the fact that certain important towns, such

as Plymouth, King's Lynn and Colchester, which were probably among the ten largest in size, are not connected to the network at all. York, the second largest town, is poorly served, and Lincoln has only local roads, although from here the normal route to York would probably have been by river.

It is tempting to presume that the lines marked on the map represented actual roads on the ground; this is probably true of routes that ran along Roman roads, although there are numerous examples of later roads having developed alongside Roman roads because travellers shunned the hard surface (if it still survived) for the softer ground alongside. Any glance at a modern map will show many minor deviations from the original line of Roman roads. The routes that do not follow Roman roads must have been tracks that developed through the continual passage of traffic; at the very least they were directions on the map to guide the traveller across open country.

Archaeological evidence

Whereas our knowledge of the Roman road system has always been strongly aided by archaeological evidence, the fact that medieval roads were not formally constructed or engineered makes any investigation of them on the ground difficult. What remains of the field evidence is of two kinds: tracks and bridges. Tracks sometimes remain intact, especially where the land has not been ploughed. Even where tracks have gone across farmland they can often still be seen on aerial photographs, either as actual tracks or as crop marks. On hill slopes multiple tracks might have been created as travellers chose the easiest way up the slope; these tracks have survived because they were never ploughed out.

On the ground the most impressive feature is a 'holloway' or sunken road, found when a road descended a slope and became virtually a stream channel in times of heavy rain, deepened by as much as twenty-five feet (seen in [Figure 2.1](#)). For the rest, the field archaeologist has to be content with raised or sunken tracks across fields, or double lynchets (that is, where banks of earth have built up) where a track was cut into a slope or hillside. It is rare to find a stretch of track more than half a mile in length, and most are much shorter, leaving a host of disjointed local tracks, many of which may or may not have been in use in the Middle Ages. The documentary sources have to be consulted

to see whether any particular road was in use in medieval times. Deserted medieval villages are perhaps the one exception to this rule, for in such cases part of the medieval landscape has been fossilized, and old routes that are no longer used can be identified.

Bridges and causeways, however, attracted more attention than roads in medieval times; their provision and maintenance were regarded as pious acts, and consequently church and monastic charters and records often refer to them. Special taxes (pontages) were sometimes raised for their upkeep, and they figure more often than roads in medieval court cases. Medieval bridges were simple at first, being wide enough only for packhorses; there was usually a ford alongside for wagons.³¹ Stone bridges are numerous, the earliest dating from the twelfth century; even in remote Westmorland twelve stone bridges are known to have existed in the fourteenth century. A few towns had fortified bridges; examples still survive at Warkworth (Northumberland) and Monmouth. Large bridges were needed in many places, especially near towns and on the major routes, for example at Staines and Windsor on the main road west from London and on the Welsh border road at Ludlow. The whole development of the latter town was altered when new streets were laid out and a new bridge built; the road to Hereford, south of the river, was also diverted.³²

Another example of where a new bridge altered the course of a road as well as the fortunes of a whole town is where the Great North Road crosses the River Ure. Formerly the Roman road crossed near what is now Aldborough (North Yorkshire), but the building of a new bridge in the early twelfth century shifted the route half a mile to the west, and the new town of Boroughbridge grew up there.³³ The road that used to lead from Aldborough to the River Ure degenerated into a grassy lane and finally ceased to be a road altogether when the village was enclosed in 1809. At Salisbury the building of Harnham Bridge south of the new town in 1244 diverted traffic from Wilton, which had formerly been the major town in the area.

Some causeways were quite substantial: Holland Bridge near Boston (Lincolnshire) was ten feet broad and eight feet high, having thirty bridges in one section. Maud Heath's Causeway, which runs for almost five miles near Chippenham (Wiltshire), was built as a legacy in 1474 to enable people to cross the River Avon dry-shod.³⁴ The fen causeways to Ely are clearly the largest examples in England.

A theoretical approach

Towns exist principally to trade; in order to attempt a reconstruction of the amount of commercial traffic between the towns of England, a theoretical approach has been used, in the form of a gravity model which, following Newtonian physics, suggests that the amount of interaction between every pair of towns is proportional to the product of their population and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them.³⁵ Thus by multiplying together the population of each pair of towns and dividing the result by the square of the distance between them, we can obtain some idea of the relative importance of the roads of England, and in particular we can see where roads ought to have existed to cater for commercial traffic, but which are not evident from the strictly acceptable historical evidence. There are two main problems with such an approach, the first is the difficulty of obtaining accurate borough population figures and of deciding how many boroughs to include; the second is the problem of plotting the interactions on a map. Such an approach is based firmly on the notion of an integrated economy with a large amount of commercial interdependence between the towns of various sizes which served the agricultural and urban systems; the larger the town, the greater was its amount of trade and the greater its sphere of influence.

Towards a national medieval transport network

Any attempt to build a national picture of the road network must be speculative, but there is considerable evidence to show which routes were the most important. The starting point must be the Roman road system, large parts of which were clearly still in use, as shown by the Gough map and the royal itineraries, despite the ravages of time and weather since the departure of the Romans. Indeed their routes have survived, and many are still in use today, though not always as through routes. To this can be added the evidence of roads on contemporary maps and the major routes used by the kings that were not along Roman routes, all of which are the medieval roads that 'made and maintained themselves'.

This distinction between the two types of road is especially apparent in certain areas; Cirencester is an important junction in the Roman system, yet Oxford and Windsor are totally divorced from it. Other distinctions emerge too: Oxford is an important junction on the map evidence, but the itineraries give more

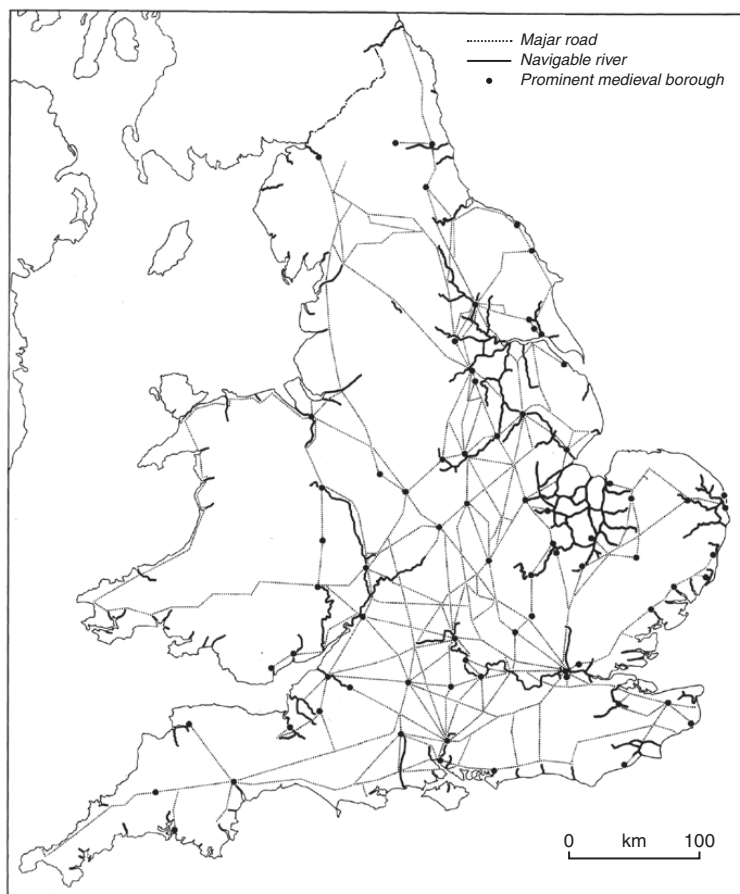


Figure 2.4 The principal routes and towns of medieval England and Wales.

prominence to the palace of Woodstock, eight miles to the north. The principal centre is clearly London, followed, in order, by York, Marlborough, Leicester, Salisbury, Winchester, Woodstock, Lincoln, Chester, Shrewsbury, Lichfield, Gloucester, Oxford and Windsor. This network is clearly at its best in central and southern England and poor in all the surrounding areas.

Research by Jim Edwards has shown that river transport in earlier medieval times was more important than many had previously thought.³⁶ Of the major rivers, the Severn was navigated to Welshpool, the Thames to Lechlade, the Trent to Burton and the

Yorkshire Ouse and Swale to Richmond. It was also possible to navigate from the Trent at Torksey along the Foss Dyke to Lincoln and thence down the Whitham to Boston. The numerous rivers of eastern England, notably around the Fens, plus those flowing into the Humber, allowed heavy or bulky cargoes to be moved conveniently by water. Rivers clearly formed part of the overall transport system, although their use probably declined in the later Middle Ages due to increasing obstruction of rivers and economic stagnation. [Figure 2.4](#) attempts to show the main routes of medieval England and Wales. Urban growth clearly relied on trade, and of the most populous towns only Coventry was not on navigable water; others such as Winchester and Thetford declined in importance, due at least in part to the difficulties of reaching them by boat. The contrast can be seen clearly in the Welsh borders where Shrewsbury on the Severn grew dramatically whilst Ludlow, on the unnavigable Teme, did not. Nevertheless, the road system still remained the basic means of transport for most goods.

Research, whether at national or local level, must involve work both in the library and in the field. The first step is to establish the Roman network, and then to see how much of it remained in use in medieval times. Then comes the more difficult task of searching for the medieval roads that made and maintained themselves; it is necessary to search out whatever medieval documents exist, and to look at maps ancient and modern, and aerial photographs. Finally armed with all this evidence it is time to go into the field to see what, if anything, remains of the medieval roads, or at least to see what options were open to the medieval traveller.

Notes

- 1 The development of urban roads and streets is a quite separate topic.
- 2 For example J. J. Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages* (London: Ernest Benn, 1889) or C. W. Scott-Giles, *The Road Goes On* (London: Epworth Press, 1946).
- 3 S. and B. Webb, *English Local Government*, vol. 5: *The Story of the Kings Highway*, (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1913), p. 5.
- 4 Webb, *English Local Government*, vol. 5, p. 6. For further discussion, see Introduction, pp. 6–7.
- 5 Paul Hindle, *Medieval Roads and Tracks* (Princes Risborough: Shire, 2009).
- 6 C. T. Flower (ed.), *Public Works in Medieval Law*, 2 vols, Selden Society 32 and 40 (London: Quaritch, 1915 and 1923), vol. 2, p. xvi.
- 7 F. M. Stenton, 'The road system of medieval England', *Economic History Review*, 7:1 (1936), 1–21.

- 8 *Calendar of Chancery Rolls, Various, 1277–1326* (1912), p. 164. See also the chapter by Dylan Foster Evans in this volume, pp. 277–302.
- 9 H. C. Darby, *The Medieval Fenland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), p. 107.
- 10 In the so-called laws of William I: A. J. Robertson (ed.), *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925), pp. 266–7.
- 11 Flower, *Public Works in Medieval Law*, vol. 1, p. 214.
- 12 Flower, *Public Works in Medieval Law*, vol. 2, pp. 207–8.
- 13 Flower, *Public Works in Medieval Law*, vol. 2, p. 98.
- 14 *Register and Records of Holm Cultram*, ed. F. Grainger and W. G. Collingwood, Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, Record Series 7 (Kendal: Titus Wilson, 1929).
- 15 See F. W. Ragg, ‘Two documents relating to Shap Abbey’, *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, n.s. 9 (1909), 271–89 (271), and ‘Shap and Rosgill and some of the early owners’, *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, n.s. 14 (1914), 1–62 (7 and 29).
- 16 C. M. L. Bouch, *Prelates and People of the Lake Counties* (Kendal: Titus Wilson, 1948), pp. 87–8. See also P. Hindle, *Roads and Tracks of the Lake District* (Milnthorpe: Cicerone, 1998, repr. 2011), pp. 40–61.
- 17 Flower, *Public Works in Medieval Law*, vol. 2, pp. 146–7.
- 18 K. C. Newton, ‘Some original documents in the Morant manuscripts’, *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, 3rd series, 2:3 (1970), 289–98, translating Henry Richards Luard (ed.), *Annales Monastici*, vol. 3: *Annales prioratus de Dunstaplia, A.D. 1–1297*, Rolls Series 36 (London: Longman, Green, 1866).
- 19 The Purveyance Accounts are in London, The National Archives, E101 class, bundles 550–97. See J. Langdon, ‘Inland water transport in medieval England’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 19:1 (1993), 1–11.
- 20 A. E. and E. M. Dodd, *Peakland Roads and Trackways* (Ashbourne: Moorland, 1980), pp. 13–18, 47–53.
- 21 The Ordnance Survey started publishing maps at six inches to the mile in 1841, and mapped the whole of England and Wales at twenty-five inches to the mile between 1854 and 1893.
- 22 Stenton, ‘The road system of medieval England’, 13–14.
- 23 G. H. Martin, ‘Road travel in the Middle Ages’, *The Journal of Transport History*, n.s. 3 (1975–6), 159–78.
- 24 B. Dickins, ‘Premonstratensian itineraries from a Titchfield Abbey MS. at Welbeck’, *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical Society*, 4 (1938), 349–61.
- 25 For an online version of this map, see *Linguistic Geographies: The Gough Map of Great Britain* (London: King’s College London, 2011), www.goughmap.org/.

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- 27 H. Gough (ed.), *Itinerary of King Edward the First Throughout his Reign*, 2 vols (Paisley and London: Alexander Gardner, 1900). See also the chapter by Michael Prestwich in this volume, pp. 97–177.
- 28 E. M. Hallam (ed.), *The Itinerary of Edward II and his Household, 1307–1328*, List and Index Society 211 (London: Swift, 1984).
- 29 H. Poole and J. P. Gilson (eds), *Four Maps of Great Britain Designed by Matthew Paris about A.D. 1250* (London: British Museum, 1928).
- 30 It was published in facsimile with a memoir as: E. J. S. Parsons (ed.), *The Map of Great Britain circa A.D. 1360 Known as The Gough Map* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958). See also B. P. Hindle, 'The towns and roads of the Gough Map', *The Manchester Geographer*, 1 (1980), 35–49; Nick Millea, *The Gough Map: The Earliest Road Map of Great Britain* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2007).
- 31 M. Cook, *Medieval Bridges* (Princes Risborough: Shire, 1998), pp. 34–6.
- 32 B. P. Hindle, *Medieval Town Plans* (Princes Risborough: Shire, 2002), pp. 56–61.
- 33 Hindle, *Medieval Roads and Tracks*, pp. 43–5.
- 34 G. N. Wright, *Roads and Trackways of Wessex* (Ashbourne: Moorland, 1988), pp. 88–9.
- 35 B. P. Hindle, 'Roads and tracks', in L. Cantor (ed.), *The English Medieval Landscape*, (London and Canberra: Croom Helm, 1982), pp. 193–217.
- 36 J. F. Edwards and B. P. Hindle, 'The transportation system of medieval England and Wales', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 17:2 (1991), 123–34. A debate about the changing importance of river transport has continued: Langdon, 'Inland water transport'; E. T. Jones, 'River navigation in medieval England', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 26:1 (2000), 60–82; John Blair (ed.), *Waterways and Canal-Building in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). See also Claire A. Martin's chapter in this volume, pp. 76–249; Paul Hindle, 'Roads and tracks in Anglo-Saxon England', in M. Clegg Hyer and G. R. Owen-Crocker (eds), *The Material Culture of the Built Environment in the Anglo-Saxon World* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, forthcoming).

Once a highway, always a highway: roads and English law, c. 1150–1300

Alan Cooper

What is a highway? In England in the Middle Ages a highway did not imply a physical structure. It was instead an especially protected space, on which people were allowed to travel. In this space, people could move without intruding on other people's property and supposedly safe from molestation. This legal understanding of the highway did, however, change greatly over the centuries.¹ It first made its appearance in the Anglo-Saxon period, as part of provision made by kings for the safety of travellers and merchants, and, in the tenth century when the West Saxon kings were in the ascendancy, it became an important part of the doctrine of the public peace.² In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the universality of this doctrine and the protected status of the highway as part of it were challenged by claims of special and private rights, based on genuine royal favour that ignored the idea of unavoidable common duties and on specious claims of ancient privilege. This understanding of the highway made it part of the king's property, disposable at his will.³ By the twelfth century, a pseudo-legal myth was doing the rounds, complete with pseudo-historical origins, which claimed that travellers were only protected on four particular, named highways – usually, but not always, the Fosse Way, Ermine Street, Watling Street and the Icknield Way – built by ancient kings. This myth was embroidered generation by generation through the twelfth century, by legists and tellers of tales alike, so that by the end of the century it had become very silly indeed.⁴ This canard seems never to have carried any real legal weight and is only significant in demonstrating how far the doctrine of the public peace on the highway under the inviolable protection of the king had declined.

In the late twelfth and early thirteenth century this process was wholly reversed, and it is the purpose of this chapter to examine by what legal means this reversal took place. The period saw the

appearance of the definition of the highway that was to lie behind all subsequent medieval litigation and legislation. The new definition of the highway often looks intriguingly similar to the Anglo-Saxon definition, but the way it is conjured by the lawyers of the thirteenth century shows that different principles were at work. Most importantly, the highway had lost its jurisdictional distinctiveness because of the assertion of the king's peace as holding generally across the kingdom. Only a few archaic jurisdictional elements of the old definition survived into the later Middle Ages. Moreover, the new understanding established in the eleventh century of the highway as one part of the king's property was adjusted under the influence of Roman law, so that while the public highway remained the king's highway it became one part of the inalienable, impersonal set of rights that pertained, properly speaking, to the Crown, not the king as a person and as a lord.

The evolution of this new public order can be seen in four stages. The first is the disappearance of the highway's distinctiveness with regard to violent crime in the laws of King Henry II (1154–89). The second is the development of the legal notion of *purprestures*, that is to say illegal intrusions on the highway, which guaranteed clear passage along the roads and established the permanent status of the highway. The third is the use of Roman law in the thirteenth-century legal compilation known as *Bracton* to reassert the status of the highway in the strongest terms, linking the highway to the Crown and asserting the inviolable quality of this link. And the final stage is the law books and legislation of the reign of Edward I (1272–1307), which show the practical use of the new doctrine by the end of the thirteenth century. These stages will be examined in turn.

One good reason that later versions of the myth of the four highways appear so frivolous was that the myth had become irrelevant: the bold legal reforms of Henry II, who was seeking to restore law and order to the kingdom after the chaos of Stephen's reign (1135–54), meant that the king's jurisdiction over the roads was no longer distinct because the king once more claimed jurisdiction over the whole country. In this context, the highway almost disappears from our sources: without the question of the profits of jurisdiction, it was of less interest to those who made and kept records.

The reassertion of royal jurisdiction over serious crime was embodied in the *Assize of Clarendon* (1166), which made practical provision for the bringing of order to the whole realm.⁵ It sent royal officers, justices and sheriffs to apprehend all notorious

robbers, murderers and thieves, recognized by a sworn jury, and to try them by the ordeal.⁶ It made provision for the building of jails at the king's expense,⁷ sought to place every man under a lord and in groups answerable for one another's conduct⁸ and required the sheriffs to co-operate in catching offenders.⁹ It stated, moreover:

[L]et there be no one in a city or a borough or a castle or without it, nor even in the honour of Wallingford, who shall forbid the sheriffs to enter into their land or their soke to arrest those who have been accused or are notoriously suspect of being robbers or murderers or thieves or receivers of them, or outlaws, or persons charged concerning the forest; but the king commands that they shall aid the sheriffs to capture them.¹⁰

This effectively rendered irrelevant the kind of arguments over jurisdiction contained in the dispute at Penenden Heath in 1072, at which the Archbishop of Canterbury contested the right of the king's men to pursue someone suspected of crime on the roads into the lands of the archbishop – when it came to the pursuit of criminals, it no longer mattered whether the crime had been committed on the highway or not.¹¹

Indeed, with the beginnings of the court rolls, it is possible to perceive the lack of distinct jurisdiction over the highway. In 1198 Robert de Northorp claimed that Hugh de Verli and his sons attacked and set fire to his house and then chased him from the burning house and robbed him on the king's highway (*strata domini regis*).¹² Similarly, in 1200, Elias the Marshall claimed that the reeve of the Bishop of Winchester insulted and robbed him on the highway (*via regia*) as he was going to Winchester.¹³ In both these cases, as in many others that follow,¹⁴ the reference to the highway is merely to the location of the crime and is connected to the actions of the victim; the location makes no difference in the process of the case: the king's peace is violated simply by the attackers' actions, not by the place of the attack.¹⁵ As a consequence, the specific crime of assault on the road, called *forestel* in Old English, ceased to be a crime in its own right.¹⁶

The distinctiveness of the highway continues to appear in only two ways. The first is the repeated prohibition against making distrains (i.e. seizure of goods to force payment of money owed) upon the highway. This is, however, not so much a case of the highway as a special zone of jurisdiction, as it is part of the general rule that a lord cannot distrain upon his men outside his

own jurisdiction. The Provisions of Westminster (1259) allow only the king and his officers to make distraints ‘on the royal or common street (*regia aut communi strata*)’.¹⁷

In fact, the only real vestige of the highway’s privileged status is found in the protection allowed to those abjuring the realm, protection allowed only so long as the abjurer stays on the direct route of the *via regia* to the port of exit. The rule was repeated in Bracton (in a passage considered to be a later gloss by its modern editor),¹⁸ in the Statute of Wales (1284)¹⁹ and in the late thirteenth-century law books Fleta²⁰ and Britton.²¹ Fleta is the strictest about the rule: whereas Bracton allows the abjurer to stray from the road in dire necessity and to seek shelter, Fleta says:

[I]t shall be forbidden him to leave the *via regia* until he finds passage [overseas]. And ungirt and unshod, with head uncovered, in only a tunic, as though he were to be hanged on the gallows, he shall set out, with a cross clasped in his hands. And when he comes to the sea, if he finds no passage, he must walk into the sea up to the neck and, having raised the hue, he must remain on the shore until he finds passage. And if he strays in the least from the *strata*, by night or day, or if he returns without leave, he may be beheaded with impunity, unless he is captured, in which case he must be put in jail.²²

This rule may seem hopelessly symbolic and archaic, but it does seem to have been known and observed.²³ A case heard by the justice Hugh Bigod in 1258 illustrates knowledge of the letter of the law:

Richard of Glaston, elsewhere accused of theft ... abjured the realm before the coroners. Thus he was given the port of Dover. Richard, afterwards caught, comes and says that he was captured unjustly and against the peace. He says that whereas on the day given to be at the port he, according to the law and custom of the realm of England, kept to the *regia strata*, straying neither to the right or to the left, when between Northampton and Newport Pagnell certain unknown men came, sent by order of Hugh de Manneby, sheriff of Northampton, and threw him to the ground. While he remained prostrate on the ground, holding a cart wheel in both hands out of fear, they beat and wounded his back and arms with bows and other weapons, so that as a result of which beating and blows his flesh on his back and arms is putrid. And they extracted him half-alive from the *strata* and led him to the Northampton jail. ... Hugh the sheriff ... says that whereas Richard, after he had abjured the realm and had been given that port as aforesaid, he strayed, so that his serjeants,

who had been sent to escort him, found him outside the *regale chiminium*, they raised the hue according to the law of the land and captured him and led him to jail, and that no transgression was done.

The jury agreed with the victim's story that he was on the *regalis via* until taken from it by the sheriff's men;²⁴ in so doing, the jurors showed that they still perceived a space denoted as the king's highway, even if its distinctiveness with regards to crimes of violence was relevant in only the rarest of cases.

Meanwhile, the king's highway had gained a different kind of significance. In the new ordering of the legal system after the Conquest, the highway had come to be seen as the king's property; in the second half of the twelfth century, however, a new concept appeared, that of the purpresture, which, whilst accepting the definition of the highway as the king's property, established the notion that harm to the king and harm to the public constituted the same thing. This created the idea of common nuisance, which could be punished by the king.

The Anglo-Saxon offence called *stretbreche* was an impersonal crime against the public order, not against the king personally; the *Leges Henrici Primi*, a compilation of English law made by someone close to the royal court in the second decade of the twelfth century, is the only evidence for the existence of the crime by that name and defines it as the crime that 'occurs when someone breaks the road by closing it, diverting it or digging in it'. The *Leges* lists it as one of the pleas held solely by the king, and its fine, 100s., and its treatment in the *Leges* mark it as one of the crimes against the public peace (*frið*).²⁵

On the other hand, sources contemporary and earlier than the *Leges* equate encroachments upon the road to encroachments onto royal property. These are described without the use of the word purpresture. For example, Domesday Book records only one encroachment on the road: two houses, one inside Canterbury, the other outside, are said to be 'located in the king's street (*positæ in calle regis*)', without further comment.²⁶ The Winton Domesday, a survey of royal rights in the city of Winchester undertaken c. 1110,²⁷ records a number of encroachments on roads. The most common term used there is the verb *preoccupare*,²⁸ but even it is not used exclusively, suggesting that it was not a fixed legal term.²⁹ Moreover, the treatment of the encroachments suggests a lack of concern for public interest: the encroachments are recorded without comment to indicate that

they were a criminal act; it is simply decreed that the owners should pay rent and customs on the appropriated lands.³⁰ Even where lanes had been wholly blocked, pleas had been made in front of the king's justice and a fine worked out to allow the continued holding of the appropriated land.³¹ In a couple of cases, the encroacher had sought permission beforehand from the king's reeve.³² In another, a street is recorded as being blocked by the new kitchen built as part of the extension of the royal palace.³³ None of the cases gives any indication that nuisance to the public was an issue; the only interested parties were the king, whose land had been usurped, and the person who had taken over the land.

The legal definition of a purpresture as both an encroachment upon royal land and as a nuisance to the common interest does not arise until the second half of the twelfth century. Even the word is slow to appear. It derived from Carolingian terms *porprendere* and *proprendere*, which appear in various capitularies (royal ordinances) and laws with the simple meaning of 'to seize or possess by one's own authority'.³⁴ In English documents, the term does not appear until the middle of the twelfth century.³⁵ Moreover, until the last years of the twelfth century 'purpresture' kept its general meaning of 'encroachment'. For instance, around 1156 Robert of Ghent declared to the king and his representatives in Nottinghamshire 'that I was present and saw and heard that my brother Earl Gilbert has in court deraigned from purpresture (*de preprestura*) the whole of his demesne of Eakring, with all its appurtenances in woods and hedges, and has there in that same court given all of the afore-said demesne in perpetual alms to the abbey of Rufford in honour of St Mary'.³⁶ Similarly, Nigel, Bishop of Ely, in responding to Henry II's request that all barons provide him with a list of those holding by knight's service, included a section entitled 'Of the purpresture (*purprestura*) of the marsh, which had never before been exploited'.³⁷ In neither of these cases is the word used in any specific legal sense.

The first explanation of the term in a more defined and precise sense is provided by Richard FitzNigel in the *Dialogue of the Exchequer* (c. 1180). In describing the recording of the sheriffs' accounts he talks of a section of the accounts entitled 'the account of casualties and encroachments (*excidentibus et occupatis*), which we more usually call purprestures and escheats (*propresturis et eschaetis*)',³⁸ explaining:

It sometimes happens owing to the carelessness of the Sheriff and his staff, or even through the persistence of war conditions, that those who live next to crown lands (*fundos qui corone annominantur*) occupy (*usurpent*) some portions of them and treat them as their own. Now when the Justices in Eyre, through the verdict of lawful men, have detected these things, they are valued separately from the farm of the county, and made over to the Sheriffs to be answered for by themselves. These are what we call purprestures (*propresturas*) or encroachments (*occupata*). When these are detected, they are taken away from their possessors, as aforesaid, and thenceforward accrue to the Treasury. But if the possessor, so evicted, is the original author of the deed, he will be heavily mulcted [punished] as well, unless the King is merciful to him.³⁹

Here the term is presented in a general way, as usurpation of any Crown property; the highway is not mentioned specifically. Furthermore, the word purpresture has to be explained by use of more classical Latin terms and the form of the word has not settled into its more normal form.

The section in the Pipe Rolls described by FitzNigel first appears in the roll for 1164/5 in the records of nineteen counties;⁴⁰ the first use of the term to apply to encroachments on the king's road⁴¹ appears two years later, referring to a payment of 12*d.* for a house built 'in the king's street (*in vico regis*)' in Gloucestershire by one Hasculf Musart.⁴² From this year on, such references become a regular feature of the Pipe Rolls.

It was not until the treatise known as Glanvill (c. 1188) that the term took on its precise legal sense. According to Glanvill, purprestures include encroachments not only upon the king's demesne, but also upon the public highway:

There is a purpresture in the strict sense when something of the lord king is occupied unjustly (*aliquid super dominum regem iniuste occupatur*): for example, in the royal demesnes, or by obstructing public ways (*in viis publicis astopatis*) or diverting public watercourses, or when anyone has occupied a royal street (*regiam plateam*) in a city of the lord king by building something. To put it generally, whenever anything is done to the nuisance of a royal tenement or royal way or city (*ad nocumentum regii tenementi vel regie vie vel civitatis*), the resulting plea belongs to the crown of the lord king (*ad coronam domini regis*).⁴³

Glanvill goes on to explain that purprestures are to be investigated by itinerant justices by means of the local juries and that whoever makes a purpresture on the king is to be fined, the purpresture is

to be removed and any buildings built on the land are forfeited to the king to boot.

Five elements of this definition suggest that Glanvill reflects a new way of thinking about encroachments on the highway. First, the buildings that have been built illegally are to be removed, and the offence of building them leads to punishment, not just to the paying of rent. Second, Glanvill uses the term *via publica*, borrowed from Roman law, and equates it with the *via regia*. Third, Glanvill allows the term purpresture for encroachments on land other than the king's, but does not think that it is really the proper use of the word; indeed, encroachments against anyone but one's lord are not dealt with under the title of purprestures, but through the writ of novel disseisin, the new method of dealing with illegal seizure of land. Fourth, the general definition of a purpresture is something that is considered a nuisance (*nocumentum*), as decided by a jury. Fifth, the plea is described as belonging not to the king, but to the 'crown of the king'. This term hints at the new doctrine being developed across Europe, that of the inalienable regalia: rights that belonged to the king in such a way that they could not be alienated.⁴⁴ All these elements suggest that the theory of purprestures served to return a sense of public interest to the problem of highways that had been encroached upon in such a way as might leave them unusable. In a manner that anticipates the use of Roman law a generation later to assert the equation of royal and public interest, Glanvill makes royal justice responsible for solving public difficulties and thus brings all major roads under royal purview.⁴⁵

The real equation of royal and public interest was not made, however, until the first half of the thirteenth century. The treatise that traditionally goes under the name of Bracton asserts the status of the king's highway in the strongest possible terms.⁴⁶ This should not be surprising, given the political slant of the treatise, which makes it in some ways more of a radical manifesto than an impartial legal tool. Frederic Maitland describes its politics as 'those of a royal justice ... [It] will maintain the state against the feudal lords, the kingly power against seignorial justice.'⁴⁷ Samuel Thorne describes the treatise as that of a 'trained jurist with the principles and distinctions of Roman law firmly in mind, using them throughout his work, wherever they could be used, to rationalize and reduce to order the results reached in the English courts';⁴⁸ it was the product of the 1220s and 1230s, 'a time of bustling legal

activity' when 'the common law, in the doldrums during John's reign, began to be revised and restated to accommodate new views on many matters, principally those connected with ownership and possession of land'.⁴⁹

As regards the highway, the result of this revision is a radical statement of the king's rights, very distant from the doubts of the middle of the twelfth century. Three ideas in particular combine to strengthen the definition of the royal road. First, the extent of the highway is asserted in its broadest terms. Second, the definition is made flexible and extensible. Third, the ownership of the highway by the king is made inalienable and the right to take tolls on the highway questioned.

Bracton defines the extent of the highway in the section on the boundaries of property. He states that 'a military road which may be called public (*via militari quae publica dici poterit*) [is that which] leads to the sea and the ports, sometimes to markets (*ducit ad mare et ad portus et quandoque ad mercata*)'.⁵⁰ These roads are to be treated identically to the *via regia*. This two-way division of roads into *viae regiae* and *viae publicae* is somewhat reminiscent of a two-way division of the roads in the legal compilation known as the *Leges Edwardi Confessoris* (1130s), but, in treating them in the same way, Bracton implicitly adopts the definition of the *publica via* for the *via regia*.

This definition of the extent of the highway is a combination of ideas from two distinct sources: Roman law and Anglo-Saxon law. The definition of military roads comes from the *Digest*, the sixth-century compilation of Roman law that had been rediscovered in western Europe from the eleventh century on, which quotes the jurist Ulpian's opinion comparing them to local roads:

Local roads (*viae vicinales*) ... are included amongst public ways (*publicarum viarum*). But between these and other, military roads (*vias militares*) there is this difference, that military roads terminate at the seashore, in cities, public rivers (*ad mare aut in urbes aut in flumina publica*), or another military road, whereas this is not the case with local roads.⁵¹

The Anglo-Saxon definition can be found in the *Leges Henrici* and is similarly based on the roads' destinations: 'the royal road (*via regia*) ... leads into a city, a borough, or castle or royal market town (*in civitatem vel burgum vel castrum vel portum regium*)'.⁵² It seems, therefore, that Bracton reconciles the *Digest* and the *Leges Henrici* by a misunderstanding, deliberate or not, of the word *portus* in

the *Leges Henrici*. By preferring the classical meaning of ‘port’ to the English one of ‘market town’, Bracton is able to associate it with the *Digest*’s reference to the seashore.⁵³ The addition of *quandoque ad mercata* suggests the definition of the lesser roads in the *Leges Edwardi Confessoris*, ‘those leading from city to city, or borough to borough, by which men get to market or their other business (*de civitatibus ad civitates, de burgi ad burgos, per quos homines vadunt ad mercata vel alia negotia sua*)’.⁵⁴ More restricted ideas of the king’s highway, including the notion of four named highways, are ignored.

Bracton’s definition was not only unrestricted; it was flexible and extensible. This innovation again drew on Roman ideas. In Roman law, under one definition of a public road, a road was considered public if the land on which it ran was owned by the *res publica*.⁵⁵ While Roman law also recognized the idea that consistent, unhindered use of a private road established an inviolable public right to that road while the land itself remained private, its basic definition of a public road implied a fixed definition: land and rights belonged to the public.⁵⁶ New public roads could be deliberately ‘bequeathed or marked out’ and, once established, they could not be lost by non-use.⁵⁷

The various definitions of the highway proposed in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries also suggest that a highway could be identified in a fixed and permanent manner. Whether it was the idea of the king’s highway between market towns and so on, or the idea of the king’s four highways, all the definitions share the underlying premise that a road was either the king’s highway or not. Nevertheless, there was no universally shared belief as to what constituted a highway. Because these definitions were not established on a sound ideological justification, laws concerning the highway could be evaded by denial of a particular road’s status as a highway.

By contrast, Bracton arrives at an extensible definition of the highway based on use and the connection of that use to the king’s office. This is done implicitly through the use of words interchangeably. The equation of royal and public roads is achieved by straightforward assertion: ‘the royal way (*regia via*) ... cannot be ... the property of anyone except the lord king ... The same may be said of a military road which may be called public.’⁵⁸

Similarly, Bracton says the *via regia* is not just held in common between a few people or by a single corporation (*universitas*), but is ‘a property which is, so to speak, common to a greater extent,

that is, [it] is ... the common of all'.⁵⁹ This definition makes the *via regia*, which is common to all, the same as 'public roads and streets (*viae publicae et stratæ publicae*) which are dedicated solely to some public use, and in which no individual person by himself may vindicate any right', because no individual person can possess them.⁶⁰ Moreover, both the public streets and the *via regia* are called 'quasi-sacred things'.⁶¹ This is explained thus: 'quasi-sacred ... things constitute the crown itself and concern the common welfare (*communem utilitatem*), as peace and justice, which have many forms'.⁶² The practical result of this is that anyone who occupies any part of either the *via regia* or the *via publica* is considered to have made a purpresture against the king.⁶³

In short, the *via regia* was a matter of 'common welfare', was 'dedicated solely to some public use', was 'the common of all' and could not be possessed by any individual. These ideas together imply that use defines status: if everybody uses a road in common, it is public and thus the king has jurisdiction over it as protector of the public welfare. And so, in late medieval law, the test of whether a road is the king's highway or not is whether it is common to all, and the claim that a road is not *via regia* is shorthand for the claim that it is not open to all.

The third principle about the highway laid down by Bracton is arguably the most important one. It made the highway inalienable and thus prohibited the collection of tolls without explicit permission. According to Bracton, the *via regia* was a 'quasi-sacred thing', and a quasi-sacred thing 'cannot be given or sold or transferred to another by the prince or reigning king'.⁶⁴ That is to say, the *via regia* is more than the private property of the king as a person or a lord, it is the inalienable property of the Crown.⁶⁵ Consequently, no amount of proof can demonstrate that a lesser subject owns a section of the road.

Alongside the 'quasi-sacred things', however, are 'other things which touch the king's privilege but do not so touch the common welfare that they may not be given and transferred to another, for if they are that will be to the damage of no one except the king or prince himself'.⁶⁶ These privileges may be transferred by the special grace of the king⁶⁷ and include the right to take toll.⁶⁸ In disputes about such privileges, Bracton gives the benefit of the doubt to the king in two ways. First, the king's grant of privilege must be demonstrated by written warrant, because the king does not need to prove that such things belong to him, 'since it must be clear to everyone that they belong to the crown

by the *ius gentium*', in other words, by universally accepted law.⁶⁹ Without written warrant, customary use of a privilege does not imply right to that privilege, because 'time does not run against the king', and, indeed, 'great length of time does not diminish the wrong but increases it'.⁷⁰ Second, in the case of those rights and jurisdictions that were only to be actually used when the occasion arose, such as taking a toll when a cart came by, they were to be forfeited in the case of failure to assert the right through 'negligence or acquiescence'.⁷¹ In other words, such privileges may be seen as liberties that offset servitudes: that is to say, a property may carry the servitude of not taking toll, which may be offset by the grant of a liberty; however, if the liberty is allowed to lapse, the servitude is reasserted.⁷² Thus the holder of a privilege had to prove not just the existence of a written warrant but continual use of the privilege.

To summarize: Bracton's theory of the highway is that the *via regia* was established by use and was the inalienable possession of the king; that the right to take toll could only be granted by the king, which grant must be proved by written warrant, not simply by use; and that failure to take toll led to the loss of the right to do so. In other words, common use establishes the highway and the principle 'once a highway, always a highway', familiar to later centuries, is established. This theory, bolstered by adages from Roman law and by the new doctrine of inalienability of sovereignty, was in marked contrast to the theory of the highway *c.* 1100, which relied on an acknowledgment of the king's proprietary rights without ideological justification.

Bracton's theory of the highway was both a radical assertion of the king's rights and a powerful and practical tool. Bracton laid the theoretical groundwork for the inquisitions *quo warranto* in the second half of the thirteenth century – that is, royal inquests into the possession of land and rights, and 'by what document' they were held⁷³ – which were to include inquiry into those taking tolls on the roads and their justification for so doing.⁷⁴ Likewise, it is not a coincidence that just at the time when Bracton was written the first grants of temporary bridge tolls, called 'pontage', were granted: one-year grants to Ferrybridge, Drogheda and Staines, awarding the right to take tolls only for a fixed term.⁷⁵

That the seemingly arcane and abstruse pronouncements of Bracton did indeed have practical value may be seen in the reign of Edward I, in which Bracton's theory of the highway achieved its full practical expression. The highway was again made one part of

a general attempt to restore order and, moreover, rights over tolls and duties of repair were included in the increased administrative vigour exhibited in the *quo warranto* inquiries and the regular eyres (proceedings held before itinerant royal justices) and tourns (smaller-scale inquiries by each county's sheriff).

At the start of Edward's reign, England was once more in a troubled state. This was forcibly brought home to Edward's father, Henry III (1216–72), when his own baggage train was pillaged in the notorious Pass of Alton on the main road between Winchester and London. One of the few things that Henry and his barons could agree about was that this was a bad thing, although the barons' only response was to urge a diligent search for the malefactors and a better bodyguard for the king in future.⁷⁶

Edward I tried to achieve a more permanent and generally useful solution. His campaign to restore proper order was embodied in the Statute of Winchester of 1285. This statute set about the restoration of the peace in the most forthright manner: town gates were to be closed after dusk to prevent strangers from wandering around, no one was to give shelter to such strangers and everyone was to keep weapons appropriate to their status so as to be ready if summoned. As regards the roads, the statute states:

[I]t is commanded that highways (*hauz chemins*) leading from one market town to another shall be enlarged, so that woods, hedges or dykes (*bois ou haies ou fossez*) are cleared, and that there is neither dyke, underwood nor bush (*fosse, suthboys ou bussons*), where a man may lurk to do hurt near to the road, within two hundred feet of the one side, and two hundred feet of the other side of the road; this statute shall not extend unto oaks nor unto great trees, as long as it is clear underneath. And if by default of a lord who will not clear the dyke, underwood or bushes, in the manner aforesaid, any robberies be done therein, the lord shall be answerable for the felony; and if murder is done the lord shall make a fine at the king's pleasure. And if a lord is not able to fell the underwoods, the country shall aid him therein. And the king wills that in his demesne lands and woods within his forest and without, the roads shall be enlarged, as stated above. And if it happens that a park is near the highway, it is required that the lord shall reduce his park so that there be a border of two hundred feet near the highway as stated above, or that he make such a wall, dyke, or hedge, that offenders may not pass nor return to do evil.⁷⁷

This idea of clearance was not new. In 1255, for example, it had been ordered that a similar clearance should be done on either side

of the highway through the Forest of Dean.⁷⁸ This general application of the idea does seem, however, to have been novel.

The statute was enforced and was popular. Its enforcement is attested by two sources. The *Liber memorandum* (c. 1300) of Barnwell Priory, just outside Cambridge, records both the statute itself and the clearance work performed by the prior and the landholder opposite in clearing back their woods along Ermine Street between Huntingdon and Royston.⁷⁹ The general acceptance of this clearance work is confirmed by a more unlikely source: in 1940, when the Germans were planning their invasion of Britain, the Luftwaffe took aerial photographs of the whole country; these photographs are now in the US National Archives.⁸⁰ Their image of the countryside before its transformation in the last few decades shows, in places, woods cut back from roads by the distance mandated in 1285.⁸¹ In other places, trenches can be found set back from the roads marking the former edge of the woodland.⁸² Indeed, the general popularity of the statute's self-policing peace-keeping laws is attested by the demand in 1300 for the reading of the statute along with Magna Carta in full county court four times a year, and the election of three knights to ensure observance.⁸³ Moreover, in 1381 the rebels demanded that 'no law should exist but the law of Winchester'.⁸⁴

The provisions in the Statute of Winchester concerning the highway suggest the various influences on the legislation written by Edward and his lawyers. Making the lords of neighbouring lands responsible for the safety of travellers reflects the traditions of the Anglo-Saxon public order, which traditions appear to have had a bearing on the whole statute. The king's concern for the public welfare, the rejection of seigneurial ownership of the land of and by the highway, and even the act of legislating at all, reflect the ideologically charged use of Roman law by Bracton. But, beyond these more rational influences, there lies that breath of romance detected in Edward I by one of his biographers;⁸⁵ more than it resembles anything else, the Statute of Winchester resembles the Molmutine Laws, which the great fabricator of Britain's past, Geoffrey of Monmouth, claimed were promulgated by the mythical king Dunvallo Molmutius.⁸⁶

Besides the evidence of the Statute of Winchester, the legal compilations of Edward's reign show that the law of the highway had been established with a new confidence. The compilation of English law known as Britton (c. 1290) is the first source to suggest the later medieval assumption that there was someone responsible

for the repair of all roads and bridges until it was discovered otherwise. In so doing, it follows no precedent explicitly; it seems, however, that the assertion of public responsibility for repair may arise naturally out of the practical provisions for the removal of nuisances contained in the articles of the eyre. Britton states:

[L]et inquiry be made concerning weirs raised in common waters, and concerning waters and roads stopped or narrowed or in other manner appropriated; and of the diversion of the course of rivers; and of walls, houses, marlpits or ditches raised near to common roads to the nuisance of passers-by; and of the perpetrators of such nuisances; and of roads not widened; and of those who have neglected to watch according to our⁸⁷ statutes of Winchester; and of landmarks and boundaries removed; and, according to the presentment of these articles, let the defects be redressed by view of the presentors and at the cost of the offenders, and let the offenders be in our mercy in proportion to the damages that they have caused and to the profits they have received therefrom.⁸⁸

Britton goes further, however, and turns this negative responsibility into a positive duty. The passage that assumes the existence of obligations for the repair of bridges⁸⁹ assumes the same for causeways and for *communs chemins*. In the case of all three, if they are in poor repair, inquiry is to be made as to whether anyone held a tenement for the service of repairing them, and, if not, the local people in general were to be amerced and distrained upon to do the necessary work.⁹⁰

Britton reflects the turning of Bracton's assertion of a royal interest in the public welfare into a process whereby the king's subjects might be held responsible for the state of the highway. The assumption that someone could be found responsible for repairs lies behind the litigation of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to compel repair of roads and bridges. Nevertheless, despite Britton's notion that someone could always be found responsible for the repairs and made to pay the penalty for the failure, this was never true in practice. Responsibility for repair of roads, just as of bridges, had to be demonstrated by precedent and could be challenged in court.⁹¹

To conclude: by the middle of the twelfth century, the king's jurisdiction over the highway had been substantially eroded. The transformation of the highway into the king's property had left it in danger of becoming one seigneurial jurisdiction amongst many. The late twelfth century and the early thirteenth century saw a reassertion of royal authority over the highways of England. This

reassertion was part of the larger movement, inspired and aided by the rediscovery of Roman law, to reassert the connection between the rights of the king and the public welfare. Ideas of this sort first appear in a rudimentary fashion in the pages of Glanvill; by the time of Bracton, they were developed enough to allow comprehensive and vigorous campaigns challenging illegal tolls and denying private rights to the common road. By the time of Edward I, the belief that the king was responsible for the common welfare was popular enough that the king was able to legislate to compel common obligations for the clearance of the highway. This new legal doctrine was not a matter of abstraction; quite the contrary: it allowed for the removal of illegal toll gates, and – conversely – the granting of royally sanctioned temporary tolls for the expressed purpose of repairing roads and bridges; it allowed the king’s officers to act against diversion of a road for private utility, whether for the extension of a deer park⁹² or the shutting of an ecclesiastical close;⁹³ and it affirmed the notion that if people became accustomed to using a particular route, they should have the right to continue doing so. These three assumptions have remained valid, despite changing practices, even to the present.

Notes

- 1 On the physical state of medieval English roads as opposed to their jurisdictional status, see recent scholarship on the repair of bridges: David Harrison, *The Bridges of Medieval England: Transport and Society 400–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) and Alan Cooper, *Bridges, Law and Power in Medieval England, 700–1400* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2006); on the layout of the road network, the best starting place is still F. M. Stenton, ‘The road system of medieval England’, *Economic History Review*, 7:1 (1936), 1–21.
- 2 Alan Cooper, ‘The rise and fall of the Anglo-Saxon law of the highway’, *Haskins Society Journal*, 12 (2002), 39–69.
- 3 Cooper, ‘Rise and fall’, pp. 63–9; Alan Cooper, ‘Extraordinary privilege: the trial of Penenden Heath and the Domesday inquest’, *English Historical Review*, 116 (2001), 1167–92. See also Cooper, *Bridges, Law and Power*, pp. 66–79.
- 4 Alan Cooper, ‘The king’s four highways: legal fiction meets fictional law’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 26:4 (2000), 351–70.
- 5 *Select Charters and Other Illustrations of English Constitutional History from the Earliest Times to the Reign of Edward I*, ed. William Stubbs, rev. H. W. C. Davis, 9th edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913, reprinted with corrections, 1951), pp. 170–3. References here will be given to the conventional clause numeration. The similarity between the provisions

of the Assize and those of the tenth-century legal codes is unlikely to have been coincidental.

- 6 Assize of Clarendon, cc. 1–6, 14.
- 7 Assize of Clarendon, c. 7.
- 8 Assize of Clarendon, cc. 3, 10, 13, 15–16, 20.
- 9 Assize of Clarendon, cc. 17–19.
- 10 Assize of Clarendon, c. 11; see also cc. 8–10.
- 11 Cooper, 'Extraordinary privilege', pp. 1167–8; cf. the declaration of the justices in eyre (proceedings held before itinerant royal justices) at the beginning of a session, as recorded by Bracton in the thirteenth century: 'let one of the senior and more distinguished among them publicly declare in the presence of all the reason for their coming, the purpose of the eyre and the advantage to be derived from keeping the king's peace ... of the king's peace and justice and the breaches thereof by murderers, robbers and burglars, who commit their crimes by day and by night, not only against those who journey from place to place but even against those asleep in their beds'; *Bracton on the Laws and Customs of England*, ed. George E. Woodbine and Samuel E. Thorne, 4 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968–77), vol. 2, p. 327.
- 12 *Curia Regis Rolls ... Preserved in the Public Record Office*, 20 vols (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1922–2006), vol. 1, p. 52.
- 13 *Curia Regis Rolls*, vol. 1, p. 179. The variation in terminology used for the highway, which will be noted here, is also indicative of the lack of a legal significance to the phrases used: the words are descriptive of a place, not a precise definition of the nature of the crime.
- 14 E.g. *Curia Regis Rolls*, vol. 1, p. 115 (1202, *via domini regis*); vol. 4, p. 216 (1206, *chimum domini regis*); vol. 4, p. 267 (1208, *chimum regis*).
- 15 *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 2, p. 406 (cf. also pp. 412 and 413).
- 16 Pollock and Maitland state: 'Precedents from the thirteenth century suggest that in this process of generalization [of the king's peace] the king's high-way was an useful channel. Often the appellor is supposed to say not merely that he was in the king's peace, but also that he was on the king's high-way when he was assaulted, and this assertion, though it has already become a rhetorical ornament, has assuredly a past history: appellors have been suffered or encouraged to declare that deeds were done on the high-way which were really done elsewhere, and the especially royal roads are losing their prerogative'; Frederick Pollock and Frederic William Maitland, *The History of English Law before the Time of Edward I*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968 [1898]), vol. 2, p. 464.
- 17 Provisions of Westminster (Legal Resolutions), c. 11, ed. and trans. in Paul Brand, *Kings, Barons and Justices: The Making and Enforcement of Legislation in Thirteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge

- University Press, 2003), pp. 413–27 (pp. 420–1); *Documents of the Baronial Movement of Reform and Rebellion, 1258–1267*, ed. R. F. Treharne and I. J. Sanders (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 144; for an example of this rule in practice, see the case of James and Cecilia of Upton in Warwickshire who in 1320 impounded a horse of Richard of Lonsby on the *regia strata* in Upton, although they were not the king's officers, and the king 'by common counsel had promised that it would not be legal for anyone of the realm to make distrains outside his fee or on the king's or common street (*regis aut communi strata*) except the king and his officers having special authority to do so'; London, The National Archives, KB 27/242 (Michaelmas, 14 Edward II), m. 95.
- 18 *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 2, pp. 382–3; the essential idea that the person abjuring the realm should leave directly is stated in the *Leges Edwardi Confessoris* (1130s), but without reference to the highway, ECf. 18.2 in Bruce R. O'Brien (ed. and trans.), *God's Peace and King's Peace: The Laws of Edward the Confessor* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).
 - 19 Statute of Wales, c. 5, *The Statutes of the Realm: From Original Records 1101–1713*, ed. A. Luders, Sir T. Edlyn Tomlins, J. France, W. E. Tauton and J. Raithby, 12 vols (London: Eyre and Strahan, 1810–28), vol. 2, p. 59.
 - 20 *Fleta*, ed. H. G. Richardson and G. O. Sayles, 3 vols, Publications of the Selden Society 72, 89 and 99 (London: Quaritch, 1955–84), vol. 2, p. 77.
 - 21 *Britton*, ed. Francis Morgan Nichols, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1865), vol. 1, pp. 64–5.
 - 22 *Fleta*, ed. Richardson and Sayles, vol. 2, p. 77.
 - 23 The only part of the rule that was probably not followed was the punishment of death by beheading. Thirteenth-century English people were reluctant to be involved in capital punishment at all, and the best evidence the court rolls give for beheading is negative: one village in Sussex allowing a returning outlaw to escape rather than beheading him; Henry Summerson, 'Attitudes to capital punishment in England, 1200–1350', *Thirteenth Century England*, 8 (1999), 123–33 (especially 124–5). I discussed the place of this attitude in changing uses of decapitation at the Haskins Society in 2014 in a paper entitled 'Toward a cultural history of decapitation'.
 - 24 The sheriff was ordered to be imprisoned but was claimed by the Bishop of Lincoln as a clerk; Richard, the victim, was sent to hospital to recover, although this was thought impossible; if he were to recover, he was to be placed back on the highway at the point he had been removed and allowed to leave the county in peace; Andrew H. Hershey (ed.), 'An introduction to and edition of the Hugh Bigod Eyre Rolls, June 1258–February 1259: P. R. O. Just 1/1187 & Just 1/873' (PhD thesis, King's College, University of London, 1991, no. A161).

- 25 Hn 80.5, 80.5a in *Leges Henrici Primi*, ed. L. J. Downer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).
- 26 While recording encroachments onto land (including royal land), Domesday (DB) uses a variety of commonplace terms: *abferre*: DB, 2c [Kent], 38b, 42a, 42b [Hants], 1232b [Herts], 203a, 208a, 208b [Hunts], 2b, 17b, 23a, 42b [Essex]; *accipere*: 19b [Essex]; *ferre*: 80b [Essex]; *invadere*: DB, 137d, 142c [Herts], 3a, 7a, 13a, 14b, 25b×2, 31a, 31b×4, 33a, 34a×2, 66b, 86a, 90b, 99a–104a *passim* [Essex]; *occupare*: DB, 60c [Berks], 139b [Herts], 14a, 28a, 29b, 33b×2, 34a, 100b [Essex]; *preoccupare*: DB, 48d [Hants], 3b, 15a, 16a, 25a [Essex]; *rapere*: DB, 208a [Hunts].
- 27 Martin Biddle (ed.), *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages: An Edition and Discussion of the Winton Domesday*, Winchester Studies 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 9.
- 28 Biddle (ed.), *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 37 (nos 19, 20), 38–9 (no. 28), 40 (no. 40), 41–2 (no. 45), 42 (no. 52), 42–3 (no. 53), 44 (no. 65), 46 (no. 78), 47 (no. 83), 57 (no. 163); for a discussion of the encroachments, see pp. 280–2.
- 29 Other verbs applied to *vici*: *hospitare*, Biddle (ed.), *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 54 (no. 135); *stupare*, p. 43 (no. 60); *esse strictior*, p. 45 (no. 73); *diffacere*, p. 47 (no. 81). In other cases, a building is simply recorded as being on, or extending onto, a road: pp. 43 (no. 59), 48 (no. 90), 49 (no. 101), 52 (no. 122), 57 (no. 165); this last practice is the one adopted uniformly in the survey of Winchester conducted in 1148: pp. 74 (no. 43), 76 (no. 56), 78 (no. 87), 79 (nos 88, 98), 80 (nos 105, 106), 133 (no. 925).
- 30 Biddle (ed.), *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 37 (no. 19), 42 (no. 52).
- 31 Biddle (ed.), *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 41–2 (no. 45), 42–3 (no. 53), 54 (no. 135). In one case it is recorded, presumably as an excuse to avoid paying rent, that some shacks in the road had been erected ‘for the love of God and to house paupers’, p. 49 (no. 101).
- 32 Biddle (ed.), *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 37 (no. 20), 43 (no. 59).
- 33 Biddle (ed.), *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 43 (no. 60); see also p. 293 for commentary on the construction of buildings, including this kitchen, connected to the extended royal palace.
- 34 See Charles du Fresne du Cange, *Glossarium mediæ et infimæ latinitatis*, new edn, ed. Léopold Favre, 10 vols (Niort: L. Favre, 1883–7), sub ‘porprendere’.
- 35 See R. E. Latham, *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish Sources* (London: British Academy, 1965), sub ‘purprestura’. Latham follows a mistake in the index of the Record Commission (1793–1816) edition of Domesday Book, which refers to ‘p’presturam’, where the phrase in question is ‘p prestu’ (the words are on a densely written folio, squeezed in as a continuation of the previous line, so

- that the letters run very close together; the editors of the Philimore edition of Domesday must have expanded the words correctly, as they translate the phrase 'on lease'; DB, 72c [Wilts]; see also *Great Domesday: Facsimile*, 6 cases, ed. R. W. H. Erskine (London: Alecto, 1986), Case 1 (fols 0–188), fol. 72v.
- 36 *English Lawsuits from William I to Richard I*, ed. R. C. van Caenegem, 2 vols, Publications of the Selden Society 106 and 107 (London: Quaritch, 1990–1), vol. 1, p. 308.
 - 37 *Liber Niger Scaccarii*, ed. Thomas Hearne, 2 vols (London: W. and J. Richardson, 1771), vol. 1, p. 249.
 - 38 Richard FitzNigel, *Dialogus de Scaccario, The Course of the Exchequer*, ed. Charles Johnson (corrections by F. E. L. Carter and D. E. Greenway) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 92–3.
 - 39 FitzNigel, *Dialogus*, ed. Johnson, p. 93.
 - 40 The first appearance of the heading is for the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk and is spelled out: 'de Esceatis et de purpresturis Dominiorum Regis de dimidio Anno', *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Eleventh Year of the Reign of King Henry II, A. D. 1164–1165*, Publications of the Pipe Roll Society 8 (London: The Pipe Roll Society, 1887), p. 10; it appears in the form mandated by FitzNigel, 'de purpresturis et esceatis', only for the counties of Gloucestershire and Surrey, pp. 12, 111; as 'de purpresturis et esceattis [sic] novis' for Kent, p. 107; simply as 'de purpresturis' for Essex, p. 21, Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, p. 24, Lincolnshire, p. 38, Hampshire, p. 43, Yorkshire, p. 51, Wiltshire, p. 60, Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, p. 62, Dorset, p. 65 (although this section does include some escheats and was listed as 'de purepresturis et esceattis' in the Chancellor's Roll, p. 65n), Oxfordshire, p. 72, Staffordshire, p. 76, Sussex, p. 93 and Northamptonshire, p. 97.
 - 41 However, the roll for 1165/66 does include two fines for ploughing in the highway, but neither is listed under this heading; *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Twelfth Year of the Reign of King Henry II, A. D. 1165–1166*, Publications of the Pipe Roll Society, 9 (London: The Pipe Roll Society, 1888), pp. 49, 89.
 - 42 *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Thirteenth Year of the Reign of King Henry II, A. D. 1166–1167*, Publications of the Pipe Roll Society 11 (London: Hansard, 1889), p. 142; it is interesting to note, however, that an identical reference can be found in the Pipe Roll for the next year, suggesting that the payment might have been rent for the house, rather than a fine for the offence; *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Fourteenth Year of the Reign of King Henry II, A. D. 1167–1168*, Publications of the Pipe Roll Society 12 (London: The Pipe Roll Society, 1890), p. 122.
 - 43 *Treatise on the Laws and Customs of England Commonly called Glanvill*, ed. G. D. G. Hall (London: Nelson, 1965), pp. 113–14.
 - 44 Peter N. Riesenbergs, *Inalienability of Sovereignty in Medieval Political Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), esp. pp. 14–15.

- 45 But cf. *Pleas of the Crown for the County of Gloucester before the Abbot of Reading and his Fellow Justices Itinerant in the Fifth Year of the Reign of King Henry the Third and the Year of Grace 1221*, ed. F. W. Maitland (London: Macmillan, 1884), p. 15 (no. 68).
- 46 *De legibus et consuetudinibus Angliæ* was traditionally attributed to Henry de Bracton, but it has been demonstrated by Samuel Thorne to have been written by several men, including Bracton, and already largely finished by 1240; for Thorne's attribution and dating, see his introduction to *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 3, pp. xiii–lii. In this section, I have used Bracton as a shorthand personification of the treatise.
- 47 Pollock and Maitland, *History of English Law*, vol. 1, p. 209; see also Fritz Schulz, 'Bracton on kingship', *English Historical Review*, 40 (1945), 136–75; Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 143–92.
- 48 *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 1, translator's introduction, p. xxxiii.
- 49 *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 3, translator's introduction, p. xxxv.
- 50 *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 3, pp. 60–1; this passage is identified by Woodbine as being an *addicio*; see *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 1, editor's introduction, p. 394.
- 51 *Digest*, 43.7.3.1; *The Digest of Justinian*, ed. Theodor Mommsen and Paul Krueger, trans. Alan Watson, 4 vols (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), vol. 4, p. 573.
- 52 Hn. 80.3a in *Leges Henrici Primi*, ed. Downer.
- 53 Cf. the definition of the *antiquae viae* of Kent on which the king claimed rights, in the memorandum of c. 1080: 'de civitate ad civitatem et de mercato ad mercatum et de portu maris ad alium portum'; David C. Douglas, 'Odo, Lanfranc, and the Domesday survey', in J. G. Edwards, V. H. Galbraith and E. F. Jacob (eds), *Historical Essays in Honour of James Tait* (Manchester: [Printed for the Subscribers], 1933), pp. 47–57 (p. 52).
- 54 O'Brien, *God's Peace and King's Peace*, p. 170.
- 55 *Digest*, 43.8.2.21; *Digest of Justinian*, ed. Mommsen and Krueger, vol. 4, pp. 575, 578. This distinction was known and repeated in medieval England, but Bracton does not use it, see Frederick Pollock, 'The king's peace', in *Oxford Lectures and Other Discourses* (London: Macmillan, 1890), pp. 65–90 (p. 82).
- 56 *Edictum perpetuum praetoris urbani*, 250a; *Ancient Roman Statutes*, ed. and trans. Allan Chester Johnson, Paul Robinson Coleman-Norton and Frank Card Bourne (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961), p. 193; *Fontes iuris romani antejustiniani*, ed. Salvatore Riccobono, vol. 1 (Florence: S. a. G. Barbèra, 1941), p. 381.

- 57 *Digest*, 43.8.2.21, 43.11.2; *Digest of Justinian*, ed. Mommsen and Krueger, vol. 4, pp. 575, 578.
- 58 *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 3, pp. 60–1; this passage is identified by Woodbine as being an *addicio* from the later thirteenth century; see *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 1, editor's introduction, p. 394; the equating of public and royal roads may have been based on the *Digest*, which quotes Ulpian's opinion that 'We mean by public roads what the Greeks called royal ... roads'; *Digest*, 43.8. 2.22; *Digest of Justinian*, ed. Mommsen and Krueger, vol. 4, p. 575.
- 59 *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 3, p. 130.
- 60 *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 3, p. 40.
- 61 *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 3, p. 40 and pp. 60–1; the latter passage is identified by Woodbine as being an *addicio*; see *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 1, editor's introduction, p. 394.
- 62 *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 2, p. 58; Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, pp. 168–91, esp. pp. 187–8.
- 63 *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 3, pp. 60–1. For an example of this principle in practice, see the case of 1227 in 'Bracton's note book', in which a charge of novel disseisin was dismissed because the tenement in question was actually a stretch of the 'cheminum commune ... omnibus de patria', which the plaintiff had sowed with seed and the defendant had flattened; from this the principle is noted in the margin that 'no one can have a free tenement in the public road that is common to everyone of the country (*chimino publico quod commune est omnibus de patria*)'; *Bracton's Note Book*, ed. F. W. Maitland, 3 vols (London: C. J. Clay, 1887), vol. 3, p. 678.
- 64 *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 2, p. 58; this passage is paraphrased elsewhere as 'those things connected with jurisdiction and the peace ... cannot be transferred to persons or tenements', which statement was glossed 'those connected with justice and the peace belong to no one save the crown alone and the royal dignity, nor can they be separated from the crown, since they constitute the crown, for to do justice, give judgment and preserve the peace is the crown, without which it can neither subsist nor endure'; *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 2, p. 167; this passage is identified as an interpolation by Thorne.
- 65 Riesenbergh, *Inalienability of Sovereignty*, pp. 33–5; Gaines Post, 'The Roman law and the "inalienability clause" of the English coronation oath', in *Studies in Medieval Legal Thought: Public Law and the State, 1100–1322* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 415–33.
- 66 *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 2, p. 58; also vol. 3, p. 167; Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, pp. 164–73.
- 67 *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 2, p. 167.
- 68 *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 2, p. 169.
- 69 *Bracton*, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 2, p. 58; see also p. 167.

- 70 Bracton, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 2, p. 58.
- 71 Bracton, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 2, pp. 167–8.
- 72 Bracton, ed. Woodbine and Thorne, vol. 2, p. 168.
- 73 Donald W. Sutherland, *Quo Warranto Proceedings in the Reign of Edward I, 1278–1294* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), esp. pp. 12–15.
- 74 A notable example here is the inquiry into the privileges of the Bishop of Lincoln, which included the right to take a toll called ‘Thurtol’ at Newark and several villages nearby; all the rest of the Bishop’s privileges were confirmed through written evidence, the toll was not (even though it may have legitimately dated back to the work done around Newark by Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln, c. 1130); *Placita de quo warranto temporibus Edw. I. II. & III. in curia receptæ scaccarii Westm. asservata* ([London]: [Record Commission], 1818), pp. 442–3 and 660–2.
- 75 Cooper, *Bridges, Law and Power*, pp. 127–47 and appendix 2.
- 76 Cf. c. 13 of the king’s complaints against his barons with c. 18 of their reply; *Documents of the Baronial Movement*, ed. Treharne and Sanders, pp. 214–15 and 230–1; efforts were made subsequently to restore a more general peace to the kingdom, see pp. 292–3 (by the baronial government of 1264) and pp. 336–7 (the Dictum of Kenilworth, c. 37); see also *Calendar of Patent Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, 6 vols (London: H.M.S.O., 1901–13), vol. 5, p. 79.
- 77 Statute of Winchester (1285), c. 5; *Statutes of the Realm*, vol. 1, pp. 96–8 (p. 97). When this statute was copied into the compilation known as *Fleta*, the compiler translated *hauz chemins* as *vias regales*; *Fleta*, ed. Richardson and Sayles, vol. 2, pp. 62–3.
- 78 *Calendar of Patent Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, vol. 4, p. 435.
- 79 Indeed, the chronicle claims that the statute was the direct result of Edward I’s hearing about the murder of two merchants on that stretch of road; *Liber memorandum ecclesie de Bernewelle*, ed. John Willis Clark (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), pp. 145–6.
- 80 The photographs relate to specific types of targets in the United Kingdom, France and the USSR for 1940–4: www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/242.html#242.25. Accessed 12 July 2015. A finding aid to these photographs is Reference Information Paper 79, *World War II Records in the Cartographic and Architectural Branch of the National Archives*, compiled by Daryl Bottoms (1992): www.archives.gov/publications/ref-info-papers/79/index.pdf. Accessed 12 July 2015.
- 81 Oliver Rackham, *History of the Countryside* (London: J. M. Dent, 1986), p. 22 and plate III.
- 82 Rackham, *History of the Countryside*, p. 270.
- 83 *Articuli super cartas* (1300), c. 17; *Statutes of the Realm*, vol. 1, pp. 136–41 (p. 140). The Charter of the Forests, the now lesser known charter granted alongside Magna Carta, was also to be read.

- 84 *Anonimale Chronicle, 1333 to 1381, from a Ms. Written at St Mary's Abbey, York*, ed. V. H. Galbraith (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1927; reprinted with minor corrections, 1970), p. 147.
- 85 Roger Sherman Loomis, 'Edward I, Arthurian enthusiast', *Speculum*, 28 (1953), 114–27; but see also the downplaying of this side of Edward's character in Michael Prestwich, *Edward I* (London: Methuen, 1988), pp. 118–23.
- 86 See Cooper, 'The king's four highways', pp. 358–60.
- 87 *Britton* is written in the king's first person.
- 88 *Britton*, ed. Nicholas, vol. 1, pp. 81–2.
- 89 Cooper, *Bridges, Law and Power*, pp. 81–4.
- 90 *Britton*, ed. Nichols, vol. 1, pp. 78–9.
- 91 See Cooper, *Bridges, Law and Power*, pp. 81–106.
- 92 E.g. *Calendar of Patent Rolls of the Reign of Edward II*, 5 vols (London: H.M.S.O., 1898–1904), vol. 2, p. 80.
- 93 E.g. *Calendar of Patent Rolls of the Reign of Edward I*, 4 vols (London: H.M.S.O., 1893–1901), vol. 1, p. 210.

When things break: mending roads, being social

Valerie Allen

A: Broken tracks afford no passage

When something breaks it gets noticed. This is as much the case for references to roads in the medieval documentary records as it is for anything else: an inquest is held to establish who is responsible for necessary repairs; an application is made to the king for a pavage grant to maintain a road; some individual is presented for having encroached onto the king's highway. The transport system has broken down and the road that formerly was a given receives now the attention of all interested parties. Something hitherto overlooked and in that sense invisible springs to the foreground of consciousness, isolated from its network of associations, the object of surprise, concern, exasperation.

This kind of attention paid to a road (or anything else) is a philosophical solicitude that does not require its object to be rendered literally useless. The unbroken/broken distinction invoked here is a perceptual and conceptual one that switches between the road as a vector, which has direction, and as ground or standpoint. One could also describe the distinction as that between a medium and an object and point in illustration to how the polished rock crystals of late medieval monstrances can serve both as windows onto a relic or the Host and as gemstones that occlude access to the sacred object.¹ Medieval mirrors play with a similar duality, the one word *mirour* doing double duty as both magnifying lens and reflective surface.² The linguistic equivocation denotes less confusion between reflection and refraction as enigma requiring hermeneutic effort. That equivocation is claimed here for medieval roads, making them both transparencies through which travellers look with the inner eye of intention towards the place they need to be and opacities that fully occupy their vision. It rescues the analysis from getting pulled towards either pole of the means/end relation that

Augustine elaborates in his famous metaphor of the Christian as *peregrinus* who ‘uses’ the road and vehicle as means to ‘enjoying’ one’s destination, the end in itself.³

It is the intention in this chapter to ‘break’ the roads of medieval England out of their environs in order philosophically to ‘notice’ them. Whether obstructed or fully functional, the road is a place in itself (ground), not simply the line of motion to somewhere else (vector), and – by mediating social relations – it participates in and performs them. In what ways might a road be a member of a medieval traveller’s social world? The question ultimately asks after the constituency and location of a community. Excluding its lived space and built environment from any definition of a community in order to isolate human actors according to standard commuter classifications (pilgrim, merchant, burgher, lord of the manor, vagabond, outlaw and so on) does not explain the experience of the road I delineate here.

A ‘broken’ road jars on modern ears, yet the word choice is correct. One of the oldest legal terms in the language for damage done to roads is *stretbreche* (street-breaking), which the twelfth-century *Leges Henrici Primi* identify as what happens when someone ‘destroys a road by closing it off or diverting it or digging it up’.⁴ Latin *frangere* (to break) routinely describes in civic records the poor conditions of paved road surfaces, as when in 1494 the pavement (*pavimentum*) in York’s Castlegate Postern degenerated to such a degree that it had become ruined and broken up (*ruinosum et fractum*).⁵ It is maybe in this sense of a smashed surface that Dame Joan Chamberlain uses the word in her will of 1501/2 when she bequeaths money for the ‘amendinge and reparinge’ of York’s surrounding infrastructure, specifically ‘wayes or briges, broken or hurte’.⁶ ‘Broken’ may alternatively here mean ‘in disrepair’, much as we speak of things having broken down. John Lydgate uses the word in this sense to refer to a carpenter mending a *broken hous*.⁷ Where phrasal verbs afflict modern English idiom, requiring one to ‘break *into* a church and steal the chalice’, in Middle English one may simply ‘breke a chirche and stele the chalice’.⁸ Context alone determines whether to *breken* an object means to share it, or stop it, or unstop it, or smash it to smithereens (now, break *up*), or penetrate it (now, break *into* or *through*), or erupt from it (now, break *out*).⁹

A route that is broken equivocates meaningfully between blockage and perforation, affording alternative ways to the commuter even as it presents a problem. The breaking of the environment

means that, in sundering, it gathers itself into a different formation. When speaking of the breaking of the deer or breaking of bread, Middle English *breken* acquires positive and social associations because it means to 'distribute' and 'partake in', for the loss of a body's totality becomes the occasion of sharing and of a different kind of knitting together of entities.¹⁰ It is this process of deformation and reformation considered in the case of medieval roads when their wholeness is temporarily jeopardized.

Medieval England's roads broke in the same way they break now, through weather, wear and tear from traffic, negligence and vandalism, yet their general lack of surfacing (relative to both Roman and modern times) and greater physical integration with the organic environment increase their vulnerability to all these actions. Water from rain will flood low-lying ways, wash away gravel, turn clay to slippery mud, loosen compressed hardness and dislodge cobblestones. Ice and packed snow leave deep gouges after thaw. Even the Romans, with their super-duper metalling, moaned about English road conditions during winter.¹¹

Daily wear and tear also takes its toll, from general foot traffic, hooves, horseshoes and particularly from wheels and sled rims. The iron-rimmed wheels of carts did the most damage, especially those studded with nails for improved grip on muddy surfaces.¹² In just one day in 1493, for example, the folk of Heworth village outside York ripped up the causeway beyond Monkbridge with their wagons, leaving deep pits that remained throughout the following winter.¹³ Ironically, wear preserves an open, unmetalled road because it keeps the surface packed, level and free of encroaching growth; with a finished surface, however, it tears the metalling.

Negligence in mending road surfaces is commonplace particularly among landlords, and religious were as liable as secular folk to be fined for same. Meet William Bewik, Prior of the House of the Augustine Friars of York 1486–1506, and brother of the priory since at least 1465.¹⁴ April 1494 sees the pavement (*pavimentum*) outside Castlegate Postern declared 'in ruins and broken up (*ruinosum et fractum*) for want of mending', and to be repaired by Bewik.¹⁵ The good brother not only omits but also commits, turning negligence to vandalism. The next month, May 1494, sees William fined for appropriating a long strip of the common road outside Northstreet Postern.¹⁶ Summer 1495 finds him digging again in the high street in front of Fishergate Bar, making huge pits and endangering 'the lord's people' crossing over at that point.¹⁷ Seven presentments of this elderly brother were made in the space

of four years for a variety of offences that kept him (or his servants) busy all over the city. The motive? Quite possibly digging for sand, gravel and cobbles to mend the pavements for which he was directly responsible.

So frequent and commonplace such street-breakings are that they are often marked in the books in shorthand: *ad nocumentum etc.* (to the nuisance of, etc.) It is precisely the repetitiveness of the petitions and presentments that illustrates their embeddedness in shared language and the constancy of concern taken over them.¹⁸ The concern emerges at the point of or in anticipation of brokenness, as does the reiteration, its frequency marked by an *etc.* In the constancy of concern with it, brokenness becomes not a special case but commonplace, the underlying condition of being a road. Brokenness constitutes a road's horizon of possibility. 'Street-breaking' is the intention in this chapter, in word if not in deed.

B: The way affords passage

The medieval road was thought of less as a physical entity, or as a defined, enclosed space, than as a right of passage or permission to move across an area en route elsewhere. In terms of the consequences for where one puts one's feet, it implies the right to circumnavigate a designated strip of road when the way ahead is blocked. When William Hawkins invokes the ancient right of deviation from an impassible pathway onto private land, he attests to the theoretical work that 'passage' does: 'for the king's subjects ought to have a good passage, and the good passage is the way, and not only the beaten track'.¹⁹ To have 'good passage' or a 'way' means experiencing the environment as it affords a clearing through which to pass. Unlike the 'beaten track', the 'way' is not determined in advance of the journey but emerges out of the terrain. Hawkins touches on a matter that goes beyond civil engineering to philosophy for his distinction measures the difference between the road as object, implying the human subject's mastery of the environment, and the road as an affordance, implying the environment's accommodation of the human subject. Considered as an affordance, the road becomes a clearing in, rather than a man-made difference from, the environment, for it 'cuts across the dichotomy of subjective-objective'.²⁰

It is worth deviating a little on the philosophical implications of the road as a clearing in the environment. Martin Heidegger

characterizes the encounter with truth (*aletheia*) as entrance into a clearing (*Lichtung*) in which something (whether path or mental thought) emerges out of hiddenness to show itself. Instead of this interplay between presence and hiddenness we are wont perhaps to think of truth as the equation of thought with object (*adaequatio intellectus et rei*, as Aquinas puts it).²¹ Heidegger's characterization however makes untruth (or hiddenness) not opposite to but inextricable from truth (or self-revealing). In the same way, 'good passage' does away with an absolute distinction between environment and road, or what Hawkins calls the open field and the beaten track. Hiddenness and self-revealing constitute modes of being itself:²² 'In the midst of beings as a whole an open place occurs. There is a clearing ... Only this clearing grants and guarantees to us humans a passage to those beings that we ourselves are not, and access to the being that we ourselves are.'²³ The experience of road-walking is more than figure of speech in Heidegger's philosophy. It comes closer to the state of affairs to call truth the abstract expression of experiencing a clearing afforded by the forest or to call being the theorization of walking a path. Like *etc.* in the civic records, the metaphor of life as a path is so freely shared that it retreats into cliché, emerging only into presence when commonplaces get broken. Medieval wills are frequent repositories of such commonplaces. Matilda Graa, whose husband Thomas would later bequeath monies for the paving of York's Tadcaster Road, speaks of being 'soon to go the way of all flesh' (*viam universe carnis confesto ingredi intendo*).²⁴ Similar phrasing marks the will of Richard, Earl of Salisbury, 'aware of being about to go the way of all flesh' (*sciens me viam universae carnis ingressurum*).²⁵ And Thomas Palmes de Naburn adds a codicil to his will a few weeks after making it in August 1433, 'in consideration of the fact that my wife Alice has gone the way of all flesh before me' (*considerans quod Alicia uxor mea viam universae carnis ante me est ingressa*).²⁶ Finally, John Pigot, making his will in 1428, wishes to be buried in whatever parish church he is in when 'it may befall me to set out on that certain path' (*me contigerit viam certitudinis ingredi*).²⁷ A notarial euphemism for dying and a phrase worn nearly meaningless through overuse, the road as metaphor for death demonstrates by its very invisibility the adjacency of thought and thoroughfare, the extent to which road-faring cuts pathways in the brain.

In order to be exercised, the right of passageway – the right to step around an obstructed road – requires a certain layout of the land, namely, an unenclosed, relatively open terrain.²⁸ As B. P.

Hindle remarks: 'Virtually the whole rural landscape of England has been totally altered since medieval times by the enclosure of the open fields. Whereas medieval roads had some degree of freedom to move or spread out, the new enclosure roads were made straighter and were confined by walls or hedges.'²⁹ The comparative openness of medieval rural landscape is thus what enables the multiple tracks that yet constitute one road. Hindle includes aerial photographs of modern vestiges of multiple parallel tracks made by medieval travellers who found the main track impassible. This formation could not occur without unenclosed terrain. It only begs the question to ask whether the unenclosed fields give medieval roads their freeform shape or whether the right to travel on land adjacent to the impassible road dictates the open field system. It is pointless to choose between asserting either the economy of common agricultural resource as cause of the legal right of flexible passageway or the legal right of passageway as cause of common access to adjacent fields. Custom and environment mutually constitute each other. Where ideology mediates landscape, landscape mediates ideology.

Where open roads made parallel tracks generally possible, urban density and narrow thoroughfares generally disallowed sidestepping. Although legal passageway on the open road could theoretically and often practically separate designated surface from right of access, the distinction blurs in areas of urban density especially as we move into the early modern period. Pamela Hartshorne notes increasing attention being paid to the evenness of surfaces as town dwellers are told to pave the street outside their frontages to the same level as their neighbours.³⁰ A commitment to quality surface increases so that traffic, restricted to one exclusive strip, flows efficiently. Medieval paving technology generally consisted of raking the old road surface smooth, laying gravel or bits of whatever was handy on top, and, where appropriate, tapping in lines of cobblestones and ramming the surface to pack them into place. In the absence of stripping the route down to its foundations, the result of such repair was an ever-heightening surface that could in the extreme case raise the road level above the doorways of the buildings. In 1603 John Stow describes St Katherine Christ Church in London as being very old 'since the building whereof the high street hath been so often raised by pavements, that now men are fain to descend into the said church by divers steps, seven in number'.³¹

Urban density puts boundaries under scrutiny, for they directly affect one inhabitant's responsibility for maintenance from that of

another. It was a general rule that town dwellers were responsible for road repair the entire length of their frontage up to the middle of the road.³² The details of a petition made by the mayor of Northampton to Henry VI in January 1431 illustrate the exactness of urban boundary. The mayor was granted authority to constrain householders whose dwellings abutted onto any 'highway or street' (*hault chesmyn, ou rue*) either to repair or to pave anew that part of the road along the entire frontage of the house 'as far as the middle of the gutter of such road or street' (*jesques al my del chanell du tiel chemyn ou rue*).³³ These gutters seem typically to have been constructed as a single runnel or kennel, running down the middle of the street. Hartshorne suggests that double side gutters, which were in place on some of York's main thoroughfares by the sixteenth century, signal an emergent sense of road layout as it later became: sidewalks, which householders took responsibility for keeping clear, and the central conduit, maintained by authorities and reserved for traffic.³⁴

Hindle notes how the enclosure of fields over the early modern period had the effect of straightening roads. Within urban areas, one might speak of the enclosure of roads with buildings, the effect on thoroughfares similarly being to narrow and straighten. In this context of constraint on either side, the sense of a road as a conduit sharpens. When passageway shrinks to one strip and the option of sidestepping diminishes, that single surface becomes the special object of concern. As surface becomes dedicated so does its conductive function as if the road itself were a gutter or pipe, transporting not rubbish but traffic. Inevitably thoroughfares come to be analogized with the circulatory system, and this in a period when blood circulation was itself a topic of keen research by William Harvey and others. 'Blockage or damage to the street was the equivalent of an urban heart attack or stroke.'³⁵ The metaphor signals a changing sense of road as a conduit and leads ultimately to analysis of the density of arterial flow, just as the study of the circulatory system led to an understanding of blood pressure through the early experiments of Stephen Hales and others.

With flow increasingly the priority, an offence committed against the road comes to be perceived less as breakage than as blockage. The verb 'block' appears on the linguistic scene in the early modern period and its sense is largely restricted to 'obstruct' or 'put something in the way of'.³⁶ The philosophical sense of it as 'a thing external to or distinct from the apprehending mind, subject, or

self' only comes into play in English in the sixteenth century.³⁷ The road qua passive object *as opposed to* the traveller qua active subject is a distinction emergent in philosophical shifts of the time that increasingly separate a thing's primary and secondary qualities – the former inhering in the object proper, the latter in the observer.³⁸ Smoothness becomes the condition in which the road withdraws or retreats in order to minimize itself into that-which-does-not-interfere-with-a-subject's-forward-motion, a privative identity that subtly differs from the road conceived as the environment affording access to the traveller. An affordance posits these so-called secondary properties such as shadedness and slipperiness (properties by which a traveller adjudges a road's safety) as qualities inherent in the environment rather than mental judgements.³⁹ Medieval *homo viator* is a creature as much acted upon as acting, a creature to whom the road reveals or affords itself. This assertion raises no eyebrows in the context of medieval romance, where the way forward is always providentially authorized for the traveller; yet it is no less relevant for medieval public works where a road might be mended for the good of a soul, and where a pavage grant could be sought and granted out of love for a saint.⁴⁰ The material and symbolic collaborate.

Nuisance records corroborate the increasing importance in the early modern period of road-as-conduit in their regulation of dumping rubbish in the road and of letting street stalls extend too far into the main way.⁴¹ When flow is the priority, the distinction between a trader's stall and a pile of refuse around which people must step starts to fade, affirming thereby Mary Douglas's claims that dirt is 'essentially disorder', 'matter out of place' and that 'where there is dirt there is system'.⁴² The impact of her point in this context is less that a trading stall should be thought of as dirt or that the concept of dirt is socially constructed than that the legislation surrounding trading stalls indicates an intuition of roads as a system vulnerable to disruption. Roads conceived as conduits is the reciprocal of a commuter infrastructure conceived as an organized whole. What is of interest is the social construction in the early modern era not of dirt but of the concept of roads-as-system, which is not to imply that medieval roads lack system, but their networked groupings are highly localized, the systematicity sporadic and densified in the central and southern regions of England. Edward I's Statute of Winchester (1285) does indeed treat roads as a national system, but the emphasis is on the connector roads between cities, ports and market towns. What is tracked here is a rising

consciousness of road system motivated by an essentially urban experience of being hemmed in on both sides even as the need for speedy access and movement increases. The need to keep objects separate from each other and not to confuse categories – a need that underpins the concepts of holiness and hygiene – intensifies in a late medieval town even as the space to perform necessary segregation diminishes. Where there is arterial ‘dirt’ there is management and a proliferation of rules to effect civic hygiene. Illustrating that kind of grass-roots organization, sixteenth-century Stockholm coordinated a street clean in which the householder farthest up the hill swept his or her path and rinsed it with a barrel of water, after which the householder living next highest did the same, and so on until the water flushed the dirt into the harbour. Increasingly severe fines were levied on scofflaw householders who disrupted this choreography of cleanliness.⁴³

A civic duty to be observed at the level of the household, urban hygiene indexes a city’s self-image and civic consciousness. It was part of urban self-care that householders should cleanse on a weekly basis the street outside their frontages. In York, a number of directives exist for such clean-ups.⁴⁴ The fact that cleaning routinely took place on Saturday evenings, in preparation for the start of the week with the Sabbath, correlates domestic and spiritual hygiene into a cleansing ritual that both bespeaks a certain urban wisdom and indexes communal self-image. If the subject acts upon the environment, so does environment upon the subject.

Hygiene rituals have their symbolic aspect and street cleaning is no exception. In August 1536, a married couple are purged from the city of York for slander against an alderman and his wife. Like the nuisance stink of illicitly dumped offal, slander perturbs the well-tempered air of neighbourliness; by extension and more seriously, it sunders the ‘Comminaltie’.⁴⁵ The couple perform a penitential walkabout, seated on horses back to front, wearing paper crowns and carrying a paper that said: ‘For setting up of sclaunderous bylls and wyful perjury, thus to be punysshed deserved have I.’ They are led from the mayor’s prison on Ouse Bridge along Coney Street, up Stonegate, out to Walmgate Bar, over to the Pavement, three times around the pillory, thence to Mickelgate Bar, the front door of the city, where they are summarily enjoined to leave and never return. Their pilgrimage of shame ritually purges the streets of the foul words they posted throughout the community, ridding the air of the moral stink, noxious as a fetid chamber pot.

If roads give skeletal structure to a town so also do its walls, which were equally important to maintain. On 9 October 1482, York's citizens went on walkabout to clear 'the bumbylles, netylles and all odyr wedys' growing around the walls of the city.⁴⁶ Fernand Braudel writes of the 'autonomous worlds' created by these stony enclosures, the consciousness they create of being an insider and how such walled towns became the focal points of emergent patriotism.⁴⁷ Further divisions between different jurisdictions within the city renders problematic any over-easy ideal of civic unity, yet the independence of towns was a given and in York's case the city enjoyed a high degree of autonomy, being answerable to the king alone.⁴⁸ If civic self-identity arises from enclosure it also emerges out of what roads and boundaries within the walls enable: internal dynamism and strife, journeys inward, movement and reorganization. Roads allow for difference within, for a subject position that is urban and urbane, interiorized and internally differentiated. They enact at the level of public space an interiority usually associated with domestic architecture and hence with individual rather than collective consciousness.⁴⁹

Therefore C: The way is not broken

One bad winter, a heavy flow of traffic, Brother William busy with his spade and random negligence can speedily reduce a road to ruins – the result of what happens anyway and what happens when neighbours serve self rather than community. With so many actors bringing about the situation, what shape should solutions take and how will they be executed? This section addresses how roads were mended.

At the corporate level of towns, communities tended to charge tolls for road maintenance. Royal permission was needed for levying tolls, the first grants appearing in Henry III's reign, increasing dramatically under Edward I, and increasing again under the three subsequent kings – Edward II, Edward III and Richard II – after which they tail off.⁵⁰ Once secured, tolls might be collected by trustworthy men of the town at the gate or, in a port town, on the quay – basically, where the main traffic feed enters the town.⁵¹ By such fiscal valves, a town once more asserted its identity through boundaries and points of ingress or egress.

Yet despite the fact that the Exchequer profited from every petition granted, the grants frequently secured royal permission for

less time than requested (one to three years was an average length of grant – sometimes up to seven). The reason for this was the sovereign's duty to balance the town's local interests against those of the larger common good.

Toll-taking could not be assumed by a town because the public road it sought to levy was the inalienable property of the Crown. By the time of and by means of the reforms of Edward I in the late thirteenth century, the highway is specifically designated as the property of the Crown rather than of the king as person and lord. Sovereign interest thus becomes identified with public interest, embodied in the highway as common to all. The clustering of pavage grants to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries can be seen as an effect of the centralizing and systematizing of sovereign interest. It is not that no one had ever thought previously to charge a toll, but that tolls now took the form of public works in the interest of the Crown.

Such Crown presence is evident in the same York Wardmote returns that track Brother William Bewik's nuisance actions all over the city. In 1491, out by Tilehouses – a parcel of land outside the walls, in the bend of the Ouse – Bewik dug a ditch that appropriated a substantial swathe of the common road.⁵² The ditch disabled 'fellow citizens of this city, namely of the people of the lord King with their carts' (*concives huius civitatis et scilicet populi domini Regis*) from passing in safety. The intensified political stature of the injured party underscores the gravity of Bewik's action and contrasts with the other kind of injured party named in the records – *vicinus* (immediate neighbour). *Vicini* live within the same smell and sound zone of each other, and are wronged when someone violates rules of common hygiene and peace, as when in 1496 John Myn the bowmaker threw urine and other waste onto the high street,⁵³ or when in 1495 Johanna Milner and other women of 'dishonest conversation' offended the ears of the locals *ad grave nocumentum vicinorum* with their 'riotous conventicle'.⁵⁴ Where a commuter road is put in jeopardy, however, the injured party augments in status from resident to citizen and liege.

Ensuring that one's local community was physically open and connected to the beyond was a way of inscribing political identity in the landscape. As a legal concept, customary use of a road (i.e. its designation as a highway or common road) has teeth. The following plea illustrates the importance of designating a road as common, for it both allows and requires the user to maintain it. During the early 1420s, the road between Abingdon and Dorchester

in Oxfordshire had become damaged through flooding. It was impassable until inhabitants of Abingdon and its surrounds built two bridges linking the town with nearby Burford and Culhamford (modern Culham). They widened, raised and repaired the road, planting willows and poplar trees along the adjacent ditches for the purposes of repair. The inhabitants then petitioned that these roads and bridges should have the permanent designation of being held in common:

And that it should be quite lawful for all the lieges of the king to make up, repair, raise, and build and clear again the said bridges, pathways, path, road and ditches to the aforesaid width and form, and again to plant and place further willows and poplars on the said banks, and to dig out, cut and take clay, marl, gravel and earth from the said ditches, and branches and twigs from the said willows and poplars, both from those which are currently planted there and from those which will be planted there, whenever it is necessary and at the appropriate time, for the repair of the aforesaid bridges, path, road and pathways, as often as they please, or as often as it will in future be necessary, forever, without impediment or hindrance from anyone.⁵⁵

The common status of the road collapses differences between freedom and obligation as it fashions all travellers into ‘lieges of the king’.

The Abingdon project was funded by alms. It is in this period that road repair becomes actively encouraged. Bequests for mending roads and bridges increased in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, being less frequent in earlier centuries.⁵⁶ Bridges – imposing structures, crucial connectors, dangerous if unstable and expensive to repair or build – are generally the preferred beneficiary, for it is feasible to pray for the soul of a benefactor having just crossed in safety, but harder to do so while traversing miles of unmarked road.⁵⁷ Along with building hospitals, helping the sick, feeding prisoners, paying for the marriage of honest maidens and the schooling of poor boys, mending roads was classified as a corporal act of mercy to the stranger. Truth’s exhortation in *Piers Plowman* to such acts of piety reads like many a will. In particular,

And wikkede weyes wiztly hem amende,
And do boote to brugges that tobroke were;⁵⁸
(And promptly fix bad roads, and repair bridges that were collapsed)

By caring for the stranger thus, one constructs oneself as a public subject, a subject of the Crown. If the corporal act of mercy

asks the testator to treat the stranger as if he were Christ, it also prompts the testator to treat the stranger as if he were England's king, to take care of royal property in anticipation of his coming. Indeed, the more anonymous the act of road care, the purer it is as an act of *pietas* – a virtue that includes duty to country as well as to god and parents. For Richard Pigot in 1483, caring for the road is a way to pay back to the world at large: 'Item to be disposed for that that I have been occupied in the worlde, and taken men's money, and not done so effectually for it as I ought to have done, for there soules, and all Cristen soules, in making of heigh wayes, and other gude dedes of charitee, by the discrecion of my saide executores, c marc.'⁵⁹ Road care goes beyond specific debts of thanks and repayments to invoke the notion of a general obligation or solicitude that includes strangers, pack animals, grazing animals, even wheels and metalling. Road care cares for stonework, distributing the testamentary self's substance into the fabric of the environment itself as dust returns to dust, ashes to ashes. In a post-eighteenth-century urban culture, where householders would increasingly be required to pay rates that would include road care, this kind of solicitude for a thoroughfare fades. 'Whereas previously the street had, in a sense, been an adjunct to the adjoining house, it now became more obviously public space, over which individuals exercised few private rights.'⁶⁰

Like many others, Richard Pigot's bequest refers generally to 'heigh wayes' rather than designating a particular stretch of road. Richard Russell, on 1 December 1435, bequeaths twenty marks 'for the repair of bridges and causeways, where great charity shall appear, within ten leagues around the City of York', namely, a day or two's travel distance from York's walls.⁶¹ Where roads within the administrative town limits were the responsibility of civic corporations and individual tenants, roads beyond those limits were less systematically funded yet vital to urban interest. Such roads will often be mentioned by name, and they are invariably connector routes between towns and roads specifically associated with markets. Roads around York named as 'beneficiaries' include: to the north, the Horsefair by St Anthony's Hospital;⁶² to the north-east, in and beyond Monkgate;⁶³ the paved road on Stockton Moor;⁶⁴ and the paved road on Heworth Moor;⁶⁵ to the east, the road on the York side of Kexby Ferry;⁶⁶ to the south-east, the road outside Walmgate Bar and the Green Dykes;⁶⁷ to the south-west, the Tadcaster road;⁶⁸ and the road between Acomb and Fulford;⁶⁹ to

the north-west, the roads on Hessay Moor,⁷⁰ and roads between York and Tollerton.⁷¹

Such bequests, neither uncommon nor frequent, tend to be made by the wealthier citizens of York, especially though not exclusively merchants, sometimes by widows. The amount bequeathed could be as modest as a quarter of a mark or as substantial as one hundred marks.⁷² Personal interest and public good need not exempt each other, as indicated in the bequest of Robert De Howm, prosperous merchant and former mayor of York, who made his will in 1396. Living near Holy Trinity Church in Goodramgate, De Howm's concern is for main commuter roads in his immediate vicinity (Gillygate and Monkgate) as well as rural roads that connect towns.⁷³ It is likely that he used these roads for his own business. Given that his own son Robert was also a prosperous merchant, Robert senior had family reasons for maintaining the roads after his death. Closing the loop of self-interest, Robert junior, heir and executor of his father's will, will have been keen to respect his father's wishes. These businessmen will have known the roads well, known what it was to have had carts stuck in mud and overturn in the Horsefair, or animals and merchandise washed away after falling through unsafe bridges. They understood that no road means no market.

Even though paving was an individual obligation for city dwellers, professional paviors could be hired for the job, especially by the wealthy. By the late fifteenth century, Southampton had its own resident pavior, while in prosperous fourteenth-century Beverley, street dwellers were simply charged for work done professionally, much as today.⁷⁴ The professional status of a pavior however was by no means clear; in London no doubt it meant someone skilled in the mystery, but in other towns it probably meant no more than a labourer 'who could only dig and ram'.⁷⁵ By the time of Edward I in 1280, London had a fixed procedure of election in place for ensuring (four) men as those responsible for repair and cleaning. As the fourteenth century progresses, the jobs of cleaning and of paving became increasingly distinct, preventive and curative actions sectioning off from each other.⁷⁶ If this is the case for the most populous city of England, it seems likely that in dramatically smaller urban settings the labour could remain mixed for longer. Unlike London and some other major cities such as Southampton, which seemed to use paviors systematically, the Corporation of York had a more ad hoc approach to the problem, using tilers in the sixteenth century to mend those

parts of the roads for which it was responsible.⁷⁷ The first mention of paviors as having a distinctive occupation in York dates from the late fourteenth century.⁷⁸

Even where the job of pavior was professionalized, the community remained involved in road repair. In 1372, work on North Bridge near Leicester was done by a pavior but supplemented by men carting the stone, two stone masons, a groom who served the masons and a group of women hired to collect stones out of the water. Exeter in 1341 saw men, hired to rake gravel, being paid in pennies and refreshments.⁷⁹ Around the act of road mending, diverse folk assembled, worked and ate together.

Medieval paviors seem not to have observed the Roman practice of laying a foundation of bedrock for major roads. Instead the gravel on the road was sloped or 'pitched' (i.e. set with stones/paved) towards the 'kennel' (i.e. canal, gutter, street drain) of the road that ran down the centre or at the sides. Then 'courses' (i.e. lines) of stones were tapped into the gravel until 'couched' (i.e. laid flat) at the right level. Finally the whole surface was rammed by hand with a hammer. And when paviors ran out of stone, they resorted to gravel or some less resistant material.⁸⁰ The combination of archaeological and documentary evidence suggests a variety of surfaces, including flat paving stones, gravel, crushed tile, iron slag and even sand and bundles of broom.⁸¹ The case of Abingdon, considered above, demonstrates the use of organic matter to bridge over holes and give traction to horses and oxen. In other words, paviors mended roads with whatever was ready to hand in the region, whether flint, chalk, clay, ironstone, clay, marl, gravel, branches and twigs. The ready-to-handness of the materials suggests that that construction called 'road' is simply a regrouping of what was already there, as if the terrain broke, stretched and shrugged a bit, and in so doing let loose some river stones and gravel, which rearranged themselves to settle into the road. No voluntary, rational agent need stand as cause beneath the infrastructure's various states of being that come about over time. What matter whether women's hands moved the river stones or rain the gravel? Roads break, lanes bung up, new formations move the way a bit to one side or the other. The agent of the action is unclear, making all and none responsible. 'The bumbylles, netyles and all odyr wedys' appear unbidden; heavy frost will dig its own pits in the road just as surely as Brother William Bewik. To ask 'who' broke this road is an unhelpfully limiting question.

Without any necessary intervention from humans, roads behave as bodies that are born and die do, their boundaries moving in synch with conditions. When depressions fill with gravel washed in by rain and falling leaves insulate the ground, medieval open roads can be said to maintain themselves in much the same way as they originally came about.

The ideal of road maintenance which the old-fashioned Englishman set before himself was, in fact, no more than 'removing every kind of impediment that incommodes or molests the traveller, such as want of proper drains, over-hanging trees and hedges, timber-logs, etc.'; in short, to quote an eighteenth century reformer, everything 'that prevents the roads from growing better of themselves'.⁸²

If using a road can cause it to break, it can also restore it to health, for being used is one of the best ways of road maintenance, as wheels, feet, hooves and paws keep the way clear of encroaching weeds and saplings. Their weight flattens surfaces, tamps gravel.

This chapter has committed 'street-breaking' in order to restore roads to their environment by registering their connection with community and their role as actors in social formations that conventionally comprise only humans. Traditional models of society we look to for definitions of *communitas* only contain humans in them. For Aristotle, the polis is the highest good, and man a political animal for 'he' (the pronoun being deliberate) is endowed with speech. Sociality and friendship occur between human equals and in the final analysis are discursively based. The particular political forms assumed by medieval culture – guilds, parishes, estates, etc. – also achieve fellowship through like-mindedness and shared activities.⁸³ Division of labour – gathering stones from the river, pulling up 'bumbles' from around the city walls and paving a street – is itself the means by which sociality occurs. To invoke Braudel's argument about the ideological consciousness of medieval towns, patriotism arises from building a wall. These traditional models of community notwithstanding, the point ultimately is that 'being in' the medieval road – traversing it weekly, daily, mending it and cleaning it – extends thought itself beyond the 'hegemony of skin and skull', beyond incipient class consciousness, beyond the camaraderie of fellow workers, beyond unspoken understandings between

human and animal, and distributes it into the lived environment of roads and stones. Agency ‘spread[s] into the world’.⁸⁴ This is the power of the medieval road as commonplace, thickened with attachment, the topos that affords thought and being.

Notes

- 1 Polished crystals made visible the sacred object by being gazed through, yet also exerted their mineral presence and powers, and as things in themselves, occluded with fractures, dirt or smokiness, they were gazed upon. See Karen Eileen Overbey, ‘Reflections on the surface, or, notes for a Tantric art history’, in Karen Eileen Overbey and Maggie M. Williams (eds), *Transparent Things: A Cabinet* (Brooklyn, NY: Punctum Books, 2013), pp. 1–15.
- 2 Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, *The Mirror: A History*, trans. Katharine H. Jewett (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 1–34.
- 3 Saint Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, book 1, chaps 3–4, trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr (New York: Macmillan, 1958), pp. 9–10.
- 4 *Leges Henrici Primi*, ed. and trans. L. J. Downer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), c. 80.5a (pp. 250–1): ‘uiam frangat concludendo uel auertendo uel fodiendo’.
- 5 T. Andrew, ‘The fifteenth-century wardmote court returns for York’ (MA thesis, University of York, 1997), p. 75 (Castlegate Ward, E31, fol. 9a). Andrew has transcribed the York Wardmote returns for the late fifteenth century – CB1a and E31 in the city of York’s archives. In damaged condition, they currently are being edited by Pamela Beatrice Hartshorne, to whom I am much indebted for her help with access to photographic records and to her work. See her thoughtful doctoral study ‘The street and the perception of public space in York, 1476–1586’ (PhD dissertation, University of York, 2004). The documents referred to in this chapter pertain for the most part to the city of York – wills and records of civic governance.
- 6 *Testamenta Eboracensia: A Selection of Wills from the Registry at York IV*, ed. James Raine, Publications of the Surtees Society 53 (Durham: Andrews & Co., 1869), p. 202. It is not syntactically clear, admittedly, whether the phrase ‘broken or hurte’ modifies bridges alone or bridges and roads.
- 7 John Lydgate, *A Selection from the Minor Poems of Dan John Lydgate*, ed. James Orchard Halliwell (London: The Percy Society, 1840), p. 252. *Middle English Dictionary* (MED) breken (v.) 7.
- 8 Geoffrey Chaucer, *Parson’s Tale*, l. 878 in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), p. 319. MED breken (v.) 12a.
- 9 See full list of entries for MED breken (v.). For breaking (i.e. unstopping) gutters, entry 15. See also MED tobreken (v.).

- 10 MED breken (v.) 1c,d.
- 11 Hugh Davies, *Roman Roads in Britain* (Oxford: Shire, 2011), p. 8.
- 12 G. T. Salusbury-Jones, *Street-Life in Medieval England*, 2nd edn (Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester, and Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1975 [1939]), pp. 22, 40–4.
- 13 Andrew, 'Fifteenth-century wardmote', p. 89 (Monkbar Ward, E31, fol. 16a).
- 14 *Collectanea Anglicana Ordinis Fratrum Eremitarum S. Augustini: A Source Book for the History of the Austin Friars in England, with a Biographical Index of over 1,000 Names*, ed. Francis Xavier Roth (Philadelphia, 1952), Index to Names, OSA – Engl., p. 4. In 1465 Lady Margaret Aske made a bequest of one mark to Brother William Bewik of the house of the order of the Augustinian Brothers, York, along with nine shillings for the making of a glass window depicting the arms of her and of her son. *Testamenta Eboracensia: A Selection of Wills from the Registry at York II*, ed. James Raine, Publications of the Surtees Society 30 (Durham: Andrews & Co., 1855), p. 276 (in Latin).
- 15 Andrew, 'Fifteenth-century wardmote', p. 75 (Castlegate Ward, E31, fol. 9a). Brother William gave money to the repair of Castlegate postern back in 1480. As a thank you from the city he was leased the chamber and dovecot over it for an annual rental of sixpence: Angelo Raine, *Mediaeval York: A Topographical Survey Based on Original Sources* (London, John Murray, 1955), p. 20.
- 16 Andrew, 'Fifteenth-century wardmote', p. 70 (North Street Ward, E31, fol. 5a).
- 17 Andrew, 'Fifteenth-century wardmote', p. 80 (Walmgate Ward, E31, fol. 11a).
- 18 Hartshorne, 'The street and the perception of public space', p. 29: 'It is precisely the repetition and "pettiness" of the offences dealt with by the wardmote courts in York that makes them so interesting.'
- 19 William Hawkins, *A Treatise of the Pleas of the Crown*, 2 vols, 3rd edn (London: E. and R. Nutt and R. Gosling, 1739), vol. 1, p. 201. Cited and discussed in full in the introduction, pp. 6–7.
- 20 James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1986), p. 129.
- 21 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. and trans. Thomas Gilby (Oxford: Blackfriars, 1964–75), 1a.16.1 corp.
- 22 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), H. 33, 219, 222.
- 23 Martin Heidegger, 'The origin of the work of art', in David Farrell Krell (ed.), *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, rev. edn (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), pp. 139–212 (p. 178).
- 24 Matilda's will, proved in 1391, was nuncupative, so the phrasing is likely to be that of a notary priest. Robert Beilby Cooke, 'Some early

- civic wills of York (continued)', *Yorkshire Architectural Society*, 31:1 (1911), Offprint 2, 10–13.
- 25 Probated in 1461. *Test. Ebor. II*, p. 239.
 - 26 *Test. Ebor. II*, p. 31.
 - 27 *Testamenta Eboracensia: A Selection of Wills from the Registry at York I*, ed. James Raine, Publications of the Surtees Society 30 (London: J. B. Nichols and Son; William Pickering, 1836), p. 416.
 - 28 Oliver Rackham, *The History of the Countryside* (London: J. M. Dent, 1986), p. 170.
 - 29 B. P. Hindle, *Medieval Roads*, 2nd edn (Princes Risborough: Shire, 1989), p. 21.
 - 30 Hartshorne, 'The street and the perception of public space', pp. 26–7, 39–40.
 - 31 John Stow, *The Survey of London*, ed. H. B. Wheatley, rev. edn (London: Everyman, 1987 [1956]), p. 129. See Salusbury-Jones, *Street-Life*, pp. 36–7.
 - 32 Dolly Jørgensen, 'Cooperative sanitation: managing streets and gutters in late medieval England and Scandinavia', *Technology and Culture*, 49:3 (2008), 547–67 (553–4).
 - 33 'PROME': *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England 1275–1504*, ed. C. Given-Wilson et al. (CD ROM, Leicester: Scholarly Digital Editions, 2005). Henry VI: Parliament of 1431, Text and Translation, iv–373 column b.
 - 34 T. P. Cooper, 'The mediaeval highways, streets, open ditches, and sanitary conditions of the city of York', *Archaeological Journal*, 22 (1912–13), 270–86 (272). Hartshorne, 'The street and the perception of public space', pp. 112–13.
 - 35 Peter Borsay, 'Early modern urban landscapes', in Philip Waller (ed.), *The English Urban Landscape* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 109. Cited by Hartshorne, 'The street and the perception of public space', p. 141.
 - 36 *OED* block (v.) 1–3.
 - 37 *OED* object (n.) 5.
 - 38 For primary and secondary qualities, see John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), Book 2, Chapter 8, §§9–10 (pp. 134–5).
 - 39 Gibson, *Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, p. 127.
 - 40 Alan Cooper, *Bridges, Law and Power in Medieval England 700–1400* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2006), pp. 136–7.
 - 41 Salusbury-Jones, *Street-Life*, p. 52 notes that Nottingham fishmongers in 1453 were ordered not to have more than two feet of space between the walls of their houses and their stalls. Borsay notes the increasing pressure in the eighteenth century to clear urban streets of temporary stalls ('Early modern urban landscapes', p. 116).
 - 42 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2002 [1966]), pp. 2, 44.

- Hartshorne draws heavily from Douglas's structuralism: 'The street and the perception of public space', pp. 22–3, 251–2.
- 43 Jørgensen, 'Cooperative sanitation', 559.
 - 44 Raine, *Mediaeval York*, pp. xii–xiii.
 - 45 *York Civic Records*, ed. Angelo Raine, 9 vols, Yorkshire Archaeological Society 108 (Wakefield: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1945), vol. 4, p. 12. The incident, occurring in August 1536, is well detailed (pp. 10–13). See also Raine, *Mediaeval York*, pp. 178–9.
 - 46 *The York House Books 1461–90*, ed. Lorraine C. Attreed (Stroud: Alan Sutton for Richard III and York History Trust, 1991), vol. 1, p. 267. The *MED* provides no gloss for 'bumbylles'; the most plausible meaning is a local term for bulrushes, for which the *OED* cites nothing earlier than 1694 (bumble (n.3)). With thanks to Michael Sargent for discussion on the matter.
 - 47 Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism 15th–18th Century*, vol. 1: *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible*, trans. Siân Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), pp. 491–520 (p. 511).
 - 48 Lorraine Attreed, 'Urban identity in medieval English towns', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 32:4 (2002), 571–92 (585–90). Sarah Rees Jones, 'York's civic administration, 1354–1464', in Sarah Rees Jones (ed.), *The Government of Medieval York: Essays in Commemoration of the 1396 Royal Charter*, Borthwick Studies in History 3 (York: Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, 1997), pp. 108–39.
 - 49 For privatization of the household in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English architecture, see Borsay, 'Early modern urban landscapes', p. 102.
 - 50 Edward Harvey, 'Pavage grants and urban street paving in medieval England, 1249–1462', *Journal of Transport History*, 31:2 (2010), 151–63 (152–3). Cooper, *Bridges*, p. 128.
 - 51 Harvey, 'Pavage grants', 154.
 - 52 Andrew, 'Fifteenth-century wardmote', p. 52 (North Street Ward, CB1a, fol. 136v).
 - 53 Andrew, 'Fifteenth-century wardmote', p. 95 (Castlegate Ward, E31, fol. 19a).
 - 54 Andrew, 'Fifteenth-century wardmote', p. 81 (Walmgate Ward, E31, fol. 12a).
 - 55 'PROME', Henry V, Parliament of 1421, Text and Translation, iv–156 column b–iv–157 column b. 'Et qe bien lise a toutz lieges du roi les ditz ponts, passages, voie, chemyn, [et fosses], en la laeure et forme suisditz, faire, reparailler, enhancer, de novel edifier et escurer, et autres wyl-lughes et poplers sur les ditz ripes de nouvelle plantier et ficher, et en les ditz fosses argille, marle, gravylle et terre, et de les ditz wyllughes et poplers les braunches et gremines, sibien de ceux queux sont ore illoeqes plantez, come de ceux queux illoeqes serront plantez, as queux heures qe busoigne serra, en temps sesonable, pur *reparacioun* des ponts, voie, chemyn et passages avaunt ditz, fower, couper et prendre

atant des foitz come lour plerra, ou serra bosoignable en temps [avenir] a toutzjours, sanz impediment ou empechement de qeconqe persone.'

- 56 Salusbury-Jones, *Street-Life*, p. 22.
- 57 In one well-known instance, Nicholas Blakburn made an agreement with other Yorkshiremen to build various stone bridges outside York's environs, sufficient to last forty years. His codicil and that of his wife, Margaret, indicate the complexities of such ventures triggered by delays, flaws in workmanship and unforeseen expenses. *The Blakburns in York: Testaments of a Merchant Family in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Ann Rycraft and The Latin Project (York: Centre for Medieval Studies, 2006), pp. 21, 24, 33.
- 58 William Langland, *Piers Plowman: A Parallel-Text Edition of the A, B, C, and Z Versions*, ed. A. V. C. Schmidt (London: Longman, 1995), B, vii, ll. 27–8 (p. 320).
- 59 *Testamenta Eboracensia: A Selection of Wills from the Registry at York III*, ed. James Raine, Publications of the Surtees Society 45 (Durham: Andrews & Co., 1865), pp. 285–6.
- 60 Borsay, 'Early modern urban landscapes', p. 109.
- 61 *Test. Ebor. II*, p. 56. 'Reparacioni pontium et calcetorum ubi major apparebit elemosina infra decem leucas circa civitatem Ebor. xx marcas.' Compare John Gilliot, on 28 December 1509: 'To emendyng & makyng of hie waies abowt Yorke, where most neid is, xx marc.' *Testamenta Eboracensia: A Selection of Wills from the Registry at York V*, ed. James Raine, Publications of the Surtees Society 79 (Durham: Andrews & Co., 1884), p. 16.
- 62 In 1407, William Vescy, a mercer of York, and parishioner of All Saints, North Street, leaves 'to the repair of the road near the Horsefair in the suburbs of York 20/–.' Printed in Rev. P. J. Shaw, *An Old York Church, All Hallows in North Street: Its Mediaeval Stained Glass and Architecture* (York: The Church Shop, 1908), p. 87. In 1509, Alison Clark, a widow, bequeaths 6/8 (half a mark) 'to help to pave the cawse be side Saint Antony's in the Horsfare'. *Test. Ebor. V*, p. 5. In 1494 three men from nearby Clifton ripped up the common causeway beside the Horsefair with their wheels. Andrew, 'Fifteenth-century wardmote', p. 65 (Bootham Ward, E31, fol. 1a).
- 63 Raine, *Mediaeval York*, p. 276, mentions bequests from 1332, 1399 and 1420. In 1396, Robert De Howm bequeaths 'for the repair of the ways (*ad reparacionem viarum*) in Monkgate and of the pavement (*calceti*) beyond Monkbridge as it shall need 10 marks'. See Robert Beilby Cooke, 'Some early civic wills of York', *Yorkshire Architectural Society*, 28:2 (1906), Offprint 1, 26–7.
- 64 In 1429, John Northeby leaves 'to the upkeep of the paved way of Stockton Moor 40s, with extra relief if the work be done to the satisfaction of my executors' (*ad sustentacionem calceti de Stokton More xls, cum ampliori relavamina si opus fuerit secundum discrecionem*

- executorum meorum). See Robert Beilby Cooke, 'Some early civic wills of York', *Yorkshire Architectural Society*, 32:1 (1913), Offprint 3, 18–19.
- 65 York, Borthwick Institute for Archives (BIA), Thomas Marsshall of Marton, Oct. 1455, Prob. Reg. 2, fol. 360v.
- 66 In 1396, Robert De Howm bequeaths 40 shillings 'for mending the way on this side and beyond Kexby Ferry' (ad emendacionem vie citra & extra Kexby Fery xl s). See Cooke, 'Some early civic wills', Offprint 1, 26–7. York, BIA, Richard Penreth of York, Oct. 1451, Prob. Reg. 2, fol. 233.
- 67 York, BIA, Richard Penreth of York, Oct. 1451, Prob. Reg. 2, fol. 233.
- 68 In 1405, Thomas Graa leaves 'to the paving of Tadcaster 3^s 4^d' (fabrice calceti de Tadcastre iii^s iiiii^d). See Cooke, 'Some early civic wills', Offprint 2, 6–7. In 1407, William de Vescy leaves 'to the repair of the road from Tadcaster to York 10/-'. See Shaw, *An Old York Church*, p. 87.
- 69 York, BIA, Richard Penreth of York, Oct. 1451, Prob. Reg. 2, fol. 233.
- 70 In 1385, John de Gysburne leaves 'to mending of the bad way on Hessay Moor a hundred shillings' (ad emendacionem debil. vie sup' le Hessaymore centum solid.). See Cooke, 'Some early civic wills', Offprint 1, 4–5. In 1396, Robert De Howm bequeaths 'for mending of the bad ways and pitfalls upon Hessay Moor 40s' (ad emendacionem malar. viar. & fomar. inter hessa more xl s). See Cooke, 'Some early civic wills', Offprint 1, 26–7.
- 71 Cooke, 'Some early civic wills', Offprint 1, 26–7: 'for mending the ways between York and Tollerton 40s' (ad emendacionem viarum inter Ebor et Tollerton xl s).
- 72 In 1405, Thomas Graa bequeaths a quarter mark (three shillings and fourpence): Cooke, 'Some early civic wills', Offprint 2, 6–7. In 1483, Richard Pigot bequeaths one hundred marks (over 66 pounds): *Test. Ebor. III*, pp. 285–6.
- 73 Cooke, 'Some early civic wills', Offprint 1, 26–7. Gillygate continues up to the Horsefair, which had a lot of local commuter traffic coming from Wigginton and Haxby: Raine, *Mediaeval York*, p. 271.
- 74 Salusbury-Jones, *Street-Life*, pp. 26–7, 30.
- 75 Salusbury-Jones, *Street-Life*, p. 27. For the history of paviers as a London guild, see the website of the Worshipful Company of Paviers, paviers.org.uk, last accessed 20 June 2015; and C. Welch, *History of the Worshipful Company of Paviers of the City of London* (London: The Worshipful Company of Paviers, 1932).
- 76 Harvey, 'Pavage grants', 156–7. Welch, *History*, pp. 1–2.
- 77 Hartshorne, 'The street and the perception of public space', p. 115. 'The Corporation's system for repairing the roads does not appear to have been a particularly efficient one ... By the sixteenth century, it is clear that, in York at least, tilers were employed to carry out repairs on the parts of road for which the Corporation was responsible.'

- 78 Cooper, 'Mediaeval highways', 284–5. Gareth Dean, *Medieval York* (Stroud: The History Press, 2008), p. 32.
- 79 Harvey, 'Pavage grants', 157–8.
- 80 Salusbury-Jones, *Street-Life*, pp. 33–7.
- 81 Harvey, 'Pavage grants', 158.
- 82 S. Webb and B. Webb, *English Local Government*, vol. 5: *The Story of the King's Highway* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1913), pp. 6–7.
- 83 For medieval 'associational forms' see David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) pp. 65–82.
- 84 Philosophers of mind Andy Clark and David Chalmers speak of the extended mind, of how we alter our environment in order to think differently: 'The extended mind', *Analysis*, 58:1 (1998), 7–19 (18).

The word on the street: Chaucer and the regulation of nuisance in post-plague London

Sarah Rees Jones

Introduction

How did writing about everyday life in towns reflect popular ideas about society and government, if at all? In seeking to answer this question this chapter will focus in particular on writing, both literary and pragmatic, about the street with a particular focus on the city of London between about 1385 and 1425. Michel Foucault's observation that the history of government is usually written from the perspective of the rulers rather than the ruled holds as true today for medieval English towns as when he first made it some forty or more years ago.¹

This chapter on the government of England's medieval towns arises out of a desire to address that issue. In 2001 I published a paper on Thomas More's *Utopia* and medieval London.² *Utopia*, published in 1516, is a remarkable work of political thought because it is the first in the Middle Ages to dwell on the position of the subject in government and to concentrate largely on the government of a city. The rulers of *Utopia*, both Prince Utopus and the urban magistrates who govern its chief city, Amaurot, are shadowy figures at best. The entire focus of the Utopian system of government is written from the perspective of the citizens, with a considerable emphasis on issues such as childcare, education, the care of the sick and old, the occupation of housing and the distribution of basic amenities and facilities. Such a focus on the domestic economy is unprecedented in other works of political advice by contemporary authors such as John Fortescue in England, Claude de Seyssel in France or Niccolò Machiavelli in Florence. As a consequence commentators on *Utopia* have found no tradition of secular thought within which it could be easily accommodated. Instead they suggest that More's focus on domestic economy was drawn from his experience of monasticism and

Christian humanism, which he developed for religious reasons, out of a desire to lead people to a better life by restricting all worldly conditions which might lead them into the sin of pride. In that paper I argued that there is a strong congruence between the issues that preoccupied urban magistrates in the fifteenth century and those about which More wrote in *Utopia*, and that many of the ideas, solutions, language and even jokes he employed made allusions to the civic law books with which he himself, as under-sheriff of the city of London, was very well acquainted. I now want to expand on that earlier paper to study developing traditions of civic political thought and expression, which paved the way for *Utopia*. In particular this chapter will explore the emergence of an urban political discourse that focused on domestic economies among men and women on the street, and employed writing about the daily lives of ordinary people as part of their rhetoric of government.

The writing of books of town law and custom grew in some volume between the later thirteenth and fifteenth centuries until all the county towns and many smaller ones had developed archives not just of working records but of elaborate registers of urban custom and history.³ Such collections were of course normative texts, designed to reflect the agendas and perspectives of their compilers. In recent years some very fruitful studies of these books, and especially of those composed in the city of London, have focused on the perspectives of the magistrates who presided over civic government and on the degree to which urban written regulation and enforcement of law reflected the agendas of civic elites both for the government of their cities and for the perpetuation of their own power.⁴

Our focus however should not only be on the ruling elites of towns, even though the surviving written materials most obviously privilege their perspective. Is it possible to discover the views of those who were the subjects of regulation? Can we recover popular opinion on medieval urban government?⁵ In particular I am interested in the representation of domestic life within public discourse.⁶ For the purposes of this chapter I am therefore going to focus on the word on the street: that is on the design and regulation of real streets and on the employment of streets as symbolic of social capital in literature, the arts and architecture. And within streets there will be an even narrower focus on windows and doors, those crucial intersections between the domestic interior and the civic exterior.

In writing about streets and civic society urban clerks drew their influences from many sources. There were philosophical treatises

such as that by the thirteenth-century Giles of Rome, who projected explicitly an understanding of the relationship between the intimate and public life of a town's inhabitants in his work *De regimine principum*, which was widely disseminated in the later Middle Ages. According to Giles, streets were naturally reproductive spaces. Let me quote him in a modernized version of an early fifteenth-century English translation by John Trevisa:

The first springing of a city was in this wise: first was a house made, then children increased and were so many that they might not dwell together in that house. Therefore were other houses made next door and so of many houses was a street made ... and a street is called *vicus* and that *vicus* and *vicina domorum* [street and neighbourhood] is all one as it were houses standing near together. And some men call a street a collective/ion of children ... and so come of them more children and more and so must be made more streets and so must be made a town or a city.⁷

The role of the street as a naturally reproductive space recurs in his discussion of trade where the community of the house provides what is needed each day for the bodily sustenance of mankind, while the street sustains life through the buying and selling between houses of those things that are not needed each day. And indeed he says that if any house needs to buy and sell what is necessary to its daily survival it is a corrupt house that survives not as men that are 'at home', nor as citizens [should], but as pilgrims and wayfaring men'.

So while modern historians understand that medieval towns prospered and grew through immigration rather than natural reproduction, and through trade and travel rather than stable domestic self-sufficiency, in Giles of Rome we have a different view that attempts to reconcile the necessary fluidity and mercantilism of the city into a vision of a well-governed and naturally reproductive organic body. In the rest of this chapter it is this tension between these two visions – the actualities of daily commerce and the expectations of virtuous norms – where we will find considerable creative elaboration in the architecture of the street and particularly in those features such as windows and doors, which framed and enabled the shared reproductive capacity of the city's households and streets.

During the later Middle Ages the reproductive potential of the street, as reflected in the work of Giles of Rome, became a powerful element in the social culture of later medieval cities. The street

provided the necessary, but potentially morally dangerous, public space both in which young men and women might meet, and for the retail of goods (especially food) that were necessary for the sustenance of everyday living. The actual importance of the street, however, was always in contrast to the moral norm, which suggested that domestic sustenance and reproduction should be located in the home. Particular tensions therefore developed around both the spatial and the behavioural intersections between home and street.

So far as trade was concerned, towns developed particular oversight over the sale of bread, ale and other foodstuffs and rigorously tried to police the sale of food from market stalls by men and women hawking goods in the streets (hucksters) and by those seeking to circumvent official market rules (regrators).⁸ Their overall aim was to restrict the profit associated with the sale of necessary foods and maintain their wholesome quality. The continuing emphasis on this regulation throughout the Middle Ages and beyond, however, suggests that the street remained a vital space for such activity.⁹ In the spatial organization of towns, the homes of middling and prosperous residents were typically segregated from the street either by setting the main residential accommodation well behind the street frontage (which was occupied by shops or poorer cottage accommodation for the less wealthy), or on upper floors in rooms that were not directly accessed from the street, even though they might have quite elaborate windows overlooking the street.¹⁰

Since the core moral concern was the material reproduction of society, inevitably there was a strong focus on gendered conduct. Inside homes, bedchambers acquired a special status that symbolized the sanctioned union of married couples and their authority not just in the home, but in civic society more widely. The occupation of such a private chamber could give status to both a man and a woman and lend authority even to their public deeds. In royal palaces the bedchamber even became (from the later fourteenth century) the major site of political activity, and prosperous bourgeois homes also increasingly invested in private chambers, parlours or home offices in which householders kept their most prized possessions and to which they retreated to attend to business affairs.¹¹ Guild halls were built with separate council chambers in which important decisions could be reached by officials in secret.¹² By contrast, informal meetings held in the street were, particularly after 1381, considered potentially seditious.¹³

Inevitably, however, such a construction of morality focused on reproduction emphasized, at its very core, different roles for

men and women. Men might aspire to public office outside the home where their status as a 'common citizen', attending the 'common council' for the 'common good', was desirable and respected. Women by contrast were expected to exercise their authority primarily within the home and the use of the adjective 'common' was a pejorative (as in 'common women'), implying promiscuity outside marriage.¹⁴ The conduct of unmarried young men and women both in the home and particularly in the street was therefore a cause for civic concern. Although the spaces themselves were not strictly gendered, conventions and increasingly rules about conduct within them were.¹⁵ By 1375, 'commun as the Strete' was a euphemism for 'promiscuous' for men as well as women.¹⁶ Girls were not supposed to dress and behave flamboyantly while out in the street, and boys (particularly apprentices, the young elite) were not supposed to approach them uninvited, nor get married without their masters' consent, nor waste (or steal) their masters' goods in order to enjoy the pleasures of the street in gambling, fighting or visiting taverns or prostitutes.¹⁷ The construction of the street as a necessary but dangerous place, for both trade and sex, had further gendered implications. Women working in the street, for example as retailers, were particularly likely to attract the term of 'common' as a pejorative rather than a positive. When, therefore, men and women did form unions, the ways in which interior domestic space and external street space were brought together had a particularly strong cultural meaning. In literature, the arts, architecture and even politics we therefore find a particular weight given to the intersections between the two: to doors (the natural site of physical interaction) but perhaps even more to windows through which via the senses of sight, smell and hearing we perceive the outside world in ways that can affect our inner imagination, sensibility and will. As the site of almost accidental perception of the street, windows carried a particular cultural importance and changed perhaps more than any other architectural feature of the town house in this period.¹⁸ They became larger, more elaborate (with the development of oriel windows and window seats) and in the wealthier houses they also became more transparent with the greater use of glass.

Troilus and Criseyde

First of all, a fictional story written by the London poet Geoffrey Chaucer between 1381 and 1386: *Troilus and Criseyde*.¹⁹ Set in the

time of the Trojan wars the story is about the Trojan prince Troilus who falls in love with a beautiful young widow called Criseyde. With the help of his friend Pandarus, who is also Criseyde's uncle, Troilus wins Criseyde's love and their relationship is consummated (though they are never married). A time of happiness and prosperity follows, which ends when the Greeks capture a famous Trojan warrior. Criseyde and the Trojan warrior are exchanged and so Troilus and Criseyde are separated. In the Greek camp Criseyde is courted by the Greek warrior and king Diomedes, who advises her to forget the city of Troy and her lover Troilus. After some hesitation, Criseyde agrees and betrays Troilus. Troilus suffers from the loss of his earthly love, but after his death he learns about eternity and eternal love.

The story of Troilus and Criseyde was first told in French in the mid-twelfth century, but Chaucer's primary source for his own poem was the version written in Italian by Boccaccio, *Il filostrato*, composed in the late 1330s.²⁰ Chaucer however freely changed and altered his sources so much that his poem is essentially new. He reduced the historical element in the story and emphasized the central importance and complexity of the love story and of the characters of the two lovers, Troilus and Criseyde, especially Criseyde whom he treats more sympathetically than Boccaccio. He dwells in some detail on her inner conscience as well as on the outer effects of her actions, and it is on some of the new elements he introduces in order to achieve this intimacy that I will focus here.

Much of the poem is set in the city of Troy, but Chaucer considerably expands on Boccaccio's text in dwelling on rich and detailed descriptions of the physical spaces in which the action is set. Chaucer's use of his contemporary London landscape is one of the ways in which he plays down the historical setting of the story in order to emphasize the universality and contemporary relevance of his discourse on love. The narrative *Troilus and Criseyde* unfolds through a sequence of intimate domestic interiors, chambers and private gardens, its erotic crescendo taking place at the epicentre of a series of ever smaller, more constricting private spaces. Yet at critical moments it is not these private spaces but the streets of Troy/London that stage the turning points in the narrative of the poem.

In Book 2 it is Criseyde's uncle, Pandarus, who seeks to persuade Criseyde to enter into a relationship with Troilus. Criseyde is reluctant: she is concerned about her public reputation as a chaste widow and the pair argue as they move through different

spaces within Criseyde's house. At length Pandarus distracts her, drawing her towards the window next to the street and asking after the owner and décor of the house opposite.²¹ As his true purpose for luring her to the window dawns on her, Criseyde's cheeks flame rosy pink. She withdraws and in the privacy of her own room she decides that she can only love Troilus as a sister. She returns to Pandarus, who sits still staring out into the street, and they argue. Just then Troilus rides by, she blushes red as rose, and so the truth of her inner feelings for Troilus is finally revealed to her.²²

Discussing the external decoration of the neighbours' houses and their owners thus literally brings Criseyde out of herself and out of her self-imposed isolation in chaste widowhood. The sight of Troilus, the war hero, champion of the public good, glimpsed through the window, enables her to see herself as a social being who can enter into a relationship. This is indeed just one of many scenes in the poem in which windows frame and enforce the narrative of the poem and construct the lovers' relationship. Near the very end of *Troilus and Criseyde*, after the two lovers have been separated 'for the town's good', the abandoned Troilus roams disconsolately through the city's streets.²³ Confronted with his lover's now shuttered and empty palace, he moves on to places that are instead still inhabited, still animated, that allow him to play out on their architecture the memory of his romance. Criseyde is conjured for us in fragments of remembered laughter and of half-forgotten song, and fleeting memories of words, movements and a final dance. Captured retrospectively, their relationship is insistently forged around a dynamic interaction of space and sociability that is seen solely from the perspective of the street through imaginary windows in buildings he passes.²⁴

In rediscovering the window, which was so present and central in the engraving used as the frontispiece to Pynson's edition in 1526 (Figure 5.1), but which was lost entirely in William Morris's nineteenth-century refashioning of the same image, we can relocate Troilus and Criseyde in the textual and material cultures of London's post-plague streets.²⁵

Chaucer was not alone in his conception of the window as the critical frame for the construction of relationships at once both public and intimate. A similar narrative device is used in Jan van Eyck's painting of a domestic scene now known as the *Arnolfini Portrait* (1434).²⁶ The newly married couple are positioned between the intimate space of the marriage bed and the public world outside the window, the formal witnesses to this both private and public

**There begynneth the booke of Troilus
and Creleyde / newly prin-
ted by a trewe
coppe.**



Figure 5.1 Frontispiece, *Troilus and Criseyde*,
printed by Richard Pynson, 1526?

event are reflected in the mirror between them, and the overshoes which the couple will put on to walk out into the street are lying beneath the window. Marriage here is both a neighbourly and an intimate union, as much a product of the street as of the bedchamber, and the window provides the essential link between the two. Once again the street is the critical imagined space in which individuals are forged as a couple into socially responsible reproductive beings through the frame of the window.

The regulation of nuisance in London

It is this reading of the street as an imagined site of sociability that we can next take to the records of the administration of the city of London and in particular the court records of the wards and their parishes which had the responsibility for maintaining the streets of the city.²⁷ In these courts, known as wardmotes, jurors were chosen from the householders of each parish where they reported infringements of city bye-laws to the ward alderman. London was the largest city in Britain, with a population of perhaps 60,000, but the parish communities of these courts were very small and intimate, almost village-like, some with a population of perhaps little more than 150 people. The bye-laws that these worthy householders were required to enforce were not made in the parish, but at a higher level of city government: that is the central council of the mayor and aldermen, who presided over the government of the whole city. These ward aldermen were of a higher social status than the jurors of the parish courts who reported to them.

The wardmote courts were charged solely with determining offences against the 'common good' and in the common spaces of the city. Private disputes were heard elsewhere and there was an emerging distinction in the treatment of public and private spaces.²⁸ The regulation of house frontages and windows overlooking the street was a matter of the public good and this was reflected in the design of houses. Windows overlooking the street increased in size and ornamentation in the fifteenth century: they were a legitimate and flaunted site of interaction.²⁹ By contrast windows overlooking private property were forbidden beneath a height of sixteen feet in case anyone's gaze should penetrate their neighbour's private business and such invasive windows were the subject of many private disputes: as when William Kylshyll, a London fishmonger, complained in 1427 that his neighbour, Alice Gayton, 'had three windows overlooking his premises at less than 16 feet

from the ground, contrary to civic custom, from which her servants and tenants could see the private business of his servants and tenants'.³⁰ In *Troilus and Criseyde* Pandarus's stance at the window overlooking the street thus implies a clear sense of his orientation towards the *res publica*.

Indeed if we now turn our gaze towards the common good and the records of the London ward courts, we can see the prominence in public nuisance cases in those courts, which we can usefully juxtapose with Chaucer's sensitivity to the built environment. Over the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the ward courts had accumulated jurisdiction over more than thirty different kinds of violation.³¹ These included economic offences (concerning trading, manufacturing and the payment of wages), petty criminal offences and administrative offences as well as environmental or nuisance offences. The nuisance offences included social misconduct such as prostitution, eavesdropping and night-walking (the breaking of curfew regulations), but also a range of physical nuisances, including the maintenance of fire safety, rights of way, pavements, and the proper disposal of waste. An analysis of the surviving records, however, suggests that many of these rules were not enforced by the courts by the early 1420s, and an increase in concern about the built environment is particularly apparent if we compare the London records of the 1420s with those from Norwich around 1300.³²

In the latter records, 96 per cent of the business of the Norwich ward courts was in the enforcement of economic regulations, petty criminal law and infringements of administrative rules, while only 4 per cent of cases related to matters of nuisance, whether social misconduct or environmental nuisances.³³ By contrast, in the London ward courts in 1421–3 there were no cases relating to petty criminal law and less than 3 per cent related to administrative malfeasance (see [Tables 5.1](#) and [5.2](#)).³⁴ The volume of cases relating to trading offences was similar, at around 29 per cent, but their nature was different, and was almost entirely concerned with regulating street traders rather than household businesses; nearly 15 per cent of cases related to hucksters and regrators.³⁵ Nuisance cases had grown to represent a large majority, nearly 70 per cent of all court business. In total, 8 per cent related to all kinds of social and sexual misconduct and 61 per cent to environmental nuisances (such as obstructed streets, broken pavements, noisome dungheaps and so on).

The reasons for these differences are likely to be complex. One reason is certainly an increasing public and popular concern

Table 5.1 Comparison of cases presented before the neighbourhood courts of Norwich and London (percentages rounded up to nearest whole integer).

	Norwich 1288–1391 (but mainly pre 1330)	London 1421–3
Trading offences	30%	29%
Administrative offences	28%	2%
Bread and ale	22%	0%
Petty criminal offences	8%	0%
Nuisance offences	4%	69%
Miscellaneous, post 1330	8%	0%

Source: *Leet Jurisdiction in the City of Norwich during the XIIIth and XIVth Ccenturies*, ed. William Hudson (London: Quaritch, 1892). Including extracts from the Norwich Leet Rolls, 1288–1313, NRO, NCR, 5B

about cleanliness, which was effective in reducing the accumulation of rubbish in the streets in fifteenth-century towns.³⁶ It is certainly possible, also, that the built environment was a particular concern of this surviving set of records since in some wards the presentments started with a list of common lanes and ditches obstructed by filth and dilapidated buildings before going on to list the presentments of individual parishes.³⁷ However it is likely that administrative, and even political, developments were responsible for the differences we find in the court records from either end of the fourteenth century. In London (as in other boroughs), legal reforms, and in particular the introduction of commissions of the peace and the rise of craft guilds during the fourteenth century, resulted in the transfer of power over many aspects of economic and criminal legislation to the central mayor’s council and the newly developing courts of craft guilds and livery companies and away from the ward and parish courts.³⁸ It is not surprising therefore that so few, indeed practically zero, craft offences are found being presented through the fifteenth-century ward courts. However the ward courts did not simply wither away, as you might expect given this loss of business; rather householders developed a new language of neighbourliness and good citizenship, which was increasingly focused on the regulation of public nuisance.

Table 5.2 Offences presented before the London ward courts, 1421–3.

WARDS and parishes	Environ- mental nuisances	Social mis- conduct	Sexual mis- conduct	Huckster/ Regurator	Bread/ Ale
COLMANSTREET	5	2			
BASSISHAW	5	3			
CRIPPLEGATE	2			9	1
WITHOUT					
PORTSOKEN	12				1
BISHOPSGATE					
All Hallows	5				
St Peter	11		1		
St Martin	6	1	2		
St Elena	8				
St Ethelburga	5				
St Botolph	21		8		
FARRINGDON	12		1	1	
WITHOUT					
St Sepulchre	10	1			
St Andrew Holborn	9				
CORDWAINER- STREET	9				
ALDERSGATE					
St Leonard	1	1	1		
St Botolph	2				
BILLINGSGATE					
St Mary at Hill	3			1	
St Andrew	1				
St Botolph					
St George	1				
FARRINGDON					
WITHIN					
St Sepulchre	1				
St Audoen	1			1	
St Michael at Corn	3				
St Martyns	1			2	
Algate	5				
St Andrew	6				1
Belleterlane and Christ Church					
VINTRY					
St Thomas Apostle	1				

Adminis- trative malfeas- ance	Trade	Foreign- ers	Leper	Craft	Apost- asy	Aliens	Fire	Orphans	TOTAL
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4

1

1

1

1

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2

1

Table 5.2 (*cont.*)

WARDS and parishes	Environ- mental nuisances	Social mis- conduct	Sexual mis- conduct	Huckster/ Regrator	Bread/ Ale
St Martin in the Vintry	2				
BROADSTREET					
St Mary Wolchirche	1				
St Bartholomew the Little	1		2		
St Margaret Lothbury	3				
All Hallows	2				
CANDLEWICK- STREET	2				1
CORNHILL	1		1		
CASTLE BARNARD	1				
CRIPPLEGATE WITHOUT	4	1			
DOWGATE	15		1		1
LANGBOURNE	3				
WALBROOK	3				1
CHEAP	3			2	1
LIMESTREET		1		4	
BREADSTREET					
St Nicholas Coldabbey	3				
St Augustine	3				
St John Evangelist	2				
St Peter in Cheap					
All Hallows Breadstreet	2				
St Mildred	1				
QUEENHITHE	10	1	1	7	1
BRIDGE	5			26	3
TOWER	4	1			
Numbers	217	12	18	53	11
Percentages	61.3	3.38	5.08	14.97	3.11

Source: *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls ... of the City of London ... AD 1323-1482*, ed. A. H. Thomas and P.E. Jones, 6 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926-61), vol. 4, pp. 115-41

Adminis- trative malfeas- ance	Trade	Foreign- ers	Leper	Craft	Apost- asy	Aliens	Fire	Orphans	TOTAL
					1				
	2	1							
1			1			1			
		1				1			
							1		
		2							
		3							
1									
1		1					1	2	
1						1			
8	3	21	2	1	1	3	2	2	354
2.26	0.85	5.93	0.57	0.28	0.28	0.85	0.5	0.56	

This can be illustrated from the presentments from Bassyn-geshawe ward in London on 27 December 1421:

Robert Sutton and his wife, being newly come from Coventry, keep their doors open at night until eleven or twelve o'clock having various men, who are strangers and unknown to the ward, making violent and grievous noises to the nuisance of all dwelling around.

William Bracy keeps carts for hire and lets them out publicly, and on divers nights beyond the due and proper hour he causes his servants to drive out of a gate issuing from the ward, bumping and striking the sides of the gate so roughly that all the neighbours dwelling round the gate are grievously disturbed of their repose and quiet at night. Further they throw dregs and other horrible noisome things outside the gate to the great nuisance of all neighbours dwelling there and other people passing by.

All the little rents [small cottages] of Richard Clerk, called the Rents of the Swan, are defective because they do not have privies, so all the tenants cast out their ordure and horrible filth and liquids before their doors to the great nuisance of Holy Church and passers by.

The house belonging to the prioress of Holywell is ruinous and on the point of falling to the ground to the great peril of passers by, and the pavement before the house is very defective, and has never been repaired, despite the fact that it has been indicted on several previous occasions.³⁹

The ever ruinous house of the prioress of Holywell is but one of numerous nuisances of the street reported repeatedly to the courts which seemed incapable of solution, but the very persistence of continuing with such complaints shows the degree to which the regulation of nuisance had made the street, above all, the most productive imaginative site for figuring social harmony. Indeed so far was the street given an imagined agency that sometimes places and inanimate objects were personified and presented in the court as offenders; in the parish of St Botolph they presented 'the grate and the ditch by the Bars because the water is stopped by dung and rubbish'.⁴⁰ Like Chaucer the jurors were able to imagine the street as an active agent in social narratives.

And the street provided a rich resource for that imagination. The inquest in Portsoken ward, in the eastern suburbs, was largely taken up with a long tirade against the master of the hospital of St Katherine by the Tower, who had enclosed and encroached upon common land, lanes and ditches, preventing access to the River Thames. He had also imposed new customs on those using the river bank for trade, on the washing of clothes, on those taking

carts along the highway and even on those poor who came begging alms on the night of St Katherine. Here the defence of the common street was clearly a vehicle for protesting against new development of the hospital site and perhaps a changing mission within the hospital itself away from the indigent poor.⁴¹ In the parish of St Peter in Bishopsgate the 'pentice of the Eagle was too low' and the pavements before six other named inns were 'defective, dangerous and a nuisance'.⁴² Similarly the gutters at five inns were 'noisome and putrid'. Occupying a major intersection at the junction of Bishopsgate and Cornhill, the parish of St Peter was a significant location for innkeepers, but the complaints also betray impatience, reflected throughout the city, with the inconvenience caused by the proximity of such businesses to city residences. The courts could also provide an opportunity to criticize civic government. The chamberlain of the Guildhall was presented for not paying the cleaner of ditches and grates (the rayker) in Colmanstreet ward, for allowing over-large stalls to be built before his 'rents' in the street and for not repairing pavements.⁴³ 'Rents' (small houses built to raise a rental income), like inns, were a frequent target of complaints, perhaps suggesting some division between the interests of more permanent or substantial householders, who tended to act as jurors, and more transient residents or poorer tenants.⁴⁴ In these ways the apparently banal discourse of complaints about smelly ditches, paving, street furniture and ruinous buildings almost certainly disguised more loaded political sentiments on the part of those making the presentments against both their social superiors and inferiors. Certainly the ward courts provided an opportunity that was seized upon enthusiastically to voice such grievances, while other aspects of street culture provided a vehicle for popular politics. Much of the politics of the years of disputed civic elections in the 1380s had taken place in the streets, whether in meetings disparaged as illegal 'covins' or in the actions of householders protesting by closing up their shops and so effectively, by going on strike, putting much of the city out of business.⁴⁵

As nuisance regulation was embraced by the ward court jurors it thus permitted the imagination of the street as a socially inclusive site for the production of social harmony. Everyone, from the prosperous and privileged grocer's wife, to civic officials, the masters of religious houses, the impoverished inhabitants of cottages such as the privy-less rents of the Swan, or the bawds who lived in 'Baudesrents',⁴⁶ was presented as an offender. The ideal of a clean and orderly environment was thus a language and a metaphor of

social inclusion. Cleanliness and tidiness are held up as objectives for all. Their achievement might even aid social integration, enabling neighbours of different status to live side by side. Such values could transform immigrants into good neighbours. The newly arrived couple from Coventry, who would be classed as 'foreigners' in the city and would not enjoy the trading privileges of citizens, were presented before the court not for trading illegally as might be expected, but for keeping a rowdy house. The implication of this is that at the level of the neighbourhood foreigners might even be welcome in London provided that they could embed themselves in the neighbourhood by behaving appropriately and by keeping a neat and well-governed house. Indeed the relatively small number of such foreigners presented as offenders before the courts suggests that they were so assimilated at a neighbourhood level.⁴⁷

Civic reform

Cosy as this may sound, the emphasis on social inclusiveness and the apparent equality of treatment of high and low before the courts may also have had more sinister implications. The pretence that social harmony was simply a matter of keeping the streets clean, and a matter in which all could equally play their part, trivialized the language of civic politics by removing from these neighbourhood forums the political disputes about the regulation of the economy and trade that had been at the root of serious social disorder (almost class war) between different interest groups among craftsmen and the merchants in the fourteenth century and earlier. In the last three decades of the fourteenth century, under the leadership of opposing mayors including John of Northampton and Nicholas Brembre, London had experienced a long period of social antagonism, popular uprisings, violent conflict and political strife rooted in matters to do with the regulation of trade and the governance of the city, and producing what has been described as a 'discursive turbulence' among London writers.⁴⁸ Conflict between emerging guilds and over the regulation of both domestic and overseas trade was mixed up with the dangerous politics of Richard II's court, leading ultimately to the execution and exile of some civic leaders and their associates. The experience produced a strong reaction. In 1391 all discussion of those events was officially proscribed, and by the fifteenth century such divisive and potentially explosive issues were dealt with only in the central courts of the common council and the court of aldermen, which tended to

be dominated by the men of the greater mercantile companies and guilds.⁴⁹

This removal of politically contentious matters from neighbourhood courts of the street to central courts meeting in the city Guildhall could be interpreted as part of a new conservatism. John Najemy, for example, has argued that the civic humanism of early fifteenth-century Italy was the product of a conservative backlash.⁵⁰ The fashion for classical and realist art forms asserted historical continuity between the classical past and the present and promoted a bland universal notion of natural citizenship, both of which suppressed the recent memories of violent popular rebellions in Italian towns in the fourteenth century. If one of Chaucer's intentions in using the London landscape in *Troilus and Criseyde* was to decenter the historical setting of the story in order to emphasize the universality of his discourse on love for a contemporary audience, might we also accuse him of a similar naturalizing neoconservatism?

Certainly his writing, like that of others, anticipated the desire of civic magistrates in the 1390s and into the early fifteenth century to clean up the city and its politics. In 1392 Richard II was reconciled with London and the friar Richard Maidstone wrote a long poetic account of his welcome back into the city in progress through its main streets and out to Westminster.⁵¹ The poem celebrated the metaphorical marriage between the monarch and his capital and the restoration of their union. The streets were specially cleansed for his progress, the guilds lined up in formal and fine array,⁵² 'ecstatic for this day has brought them great joy, since you [Richard II] now deign to come back to your marriage room'.⁵³ The happily married couple, both Richard and his wife, Anne, both monarch and city, were united in a beautiful spectacle. But a contrast was drawn between those women taking part in the procession when an unfortunate accident threw them from their carriages into the street and 'thus exposed their female thighs to view' (provoking laughter and the wish that 'lechery and lustful passion come to grief') and those sheltering in the more chaste vantage point offered by the windows of chambers along the route: 'the pretty girls look on, and are looked at too, for all the windows were packed full with pretty girls'.⁵⁴ The poem provided a standard, perhaps, for later ambitions to beautify the city and regulate the conduct of its citizens. Between 1397 and 1420 three-times mayor, Richard Whittington, and his common clerk, John Carpenter, were in particular associated with a thoroughgoing reform of civic governance,

including the construction of a new Guildhall, the reform of the city archives and the founding of the Guildhall library to combat heresy in London.⁵⁵ Their acts of civic charity extended to the foundation or reform of schools, hospitals and new civic amenities such as prisons and public latrines. Foremost among Carpenter's administrative reforms was the compilation of the *Liber albus* (The White Book of the City of London) from 1419. This mammoth codex was more than a guide to the city archives; it included a new somewhat inventive history of the city and much material on its governance that was clearly intended to restore order through a focus on the regulation of everyday trade and conduct.⁵⁶ It is in the *Liber albus* that we find the fullest record of the ordinances of the wards and it is also at the time of its compilation that the only surviving records of those courts in action were copied into the city's plea and memoranda rolls.⁵⁷ This context of the Whittington/Carpenter reforms following a period of extreme civic discord provides us with both a motive and an opportunity for the increasing focus on cleanliness in London's neighbourhood records and on its streets.

Above all, of course, the formulation of ideas of natural citizenship allowed civic bodies to reincarnate themselves in the image of Corpus Christi, as demonstrated in the art of Carlo Crivelli.⁵⁸ The city was the place where the Word became flesh in a divine annunciation of sexual civic-hood. In the perfectly clean streets there is the imagination of a utopian ideal of a harmonious, reasonable community, living regular lives reflected in a rigorously well-ordered cityscape, which will anticipate the revelation of Christ.⁵⁹ And of course it is in the fifteenth century in England that we have increasing evidence of the highly regulated speech of official street theatre from royal entries and the midsummer watch in London, the mystery plays of York or the ridings of St George in numerous county towns where the streets were regularly cleansed in annual re-enactments of the incarnation of Christ and the slaying of the foul, polluting dragon.⁶⁰ The city as a metaphysical corporation thus becomes manifest as a real body whose health needs to be guarded and nourished through the maintenance of cleanliness and social order. So cleanliness was of course placed next to godliness. This brings us to the last aspect of the ward courts; the regulation of moral nuisances relating to social misconduct on the street such as scolding, eavesdropping, maintaining badly governed houses and fornication and adultery.

The people's voice?

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of such cases of social misconduct in the ward courts, however, is that *there were very few of them*. They accounted for just 8 per cent in total of all business in the London ward courts in 1421–3, of which just twelve (3 per cent) were cases of social misconduct including offences such as nightwalking, scolding and keeping a rowdy house, and eighteen (or 5 per cent) were cases of sexual misconduct.⁶¹ Yet sexual misconduct cases have attracted a disproportionate interest both from modern scholars and from contemporary civic elites.⁶² Some of the most celebrated and discussed cases from the London mayor's court, such as two cases of sexual misconduct from the 1380s and 1390s: the case of John-cum-Eleanor Rykener (a transvestite bisexual prostitute), and the case of Elizabeth Moring, the embroidering procuress, enjoy a high profile in the secondary literature today precisely because contemporary aldermen took great interest in such cases and were required to report them directly to the mayor's court where they were recorded in particular detail.⁶³ Their timing fits well with the conservative reaction to civic unrest in the previous decade and a growing concern among civic magistrates with the moral reform of civic life evident in Maidstone's poetic metaphor of the city as a well-governed bride.

It was also in these cases that the aldermen displayed a willingness to move beyond the traditional jurisdiction of their courts into business properly belonging to the church courts (such as fornication and adultery). In London this practice developed from the thirteenth century and was reflected in an ordinance of 1444 when the aldermen were instructed to seek out adulterers in their wards and duly returned with a list of over sixty couples caught 'naked and in bed together'.⁶⁴ In such cases, the actual divide between home and street broke down altogether as the authorities showed little hesitation in disregarding the supposedly public nature of their courts, in order to imagine the supposed misconduct of people inside houses. For example on Christmas Day 1421:

John Scarle priest of the parish of St Leonard in Fasterlane was accused of being a common pimp of his own parishioners and a quarreller and a scold, and a vicious slanderer, who revealed the confession of those women who would not assent to his lechery. They also said that he deceived people with false cunning by pretending to be a physician and a surgeon, by which deception he had slain many a man.⁶⁵

In this comparatively rare accusation of sexual misconduct, which completely exceeds the formal jurisdiction of the ward courts, the common space of the street has been transformed into an imagined rather than a real space (just as it was in the paintings by van Eyck and Crivelli and in *Troilus and Criseyde*), and it has become a space that penetrates the private homes of the perpetrators of social nuisances, even the parish priest. It is therefore in this small number of, much discussed, sexual misconduct cases that we find the most powerful comparison to Chaucer's imaginative use of the street and street architecture in his narrative from the 1380s of the role of love in the city.

Later in the fifteenth century the number of these sexual misconduct cases in local courts was to grow. Over 70 per cent of the cases from the surviving records of the London ward of Portsoken between 1465 and 1482 were concerned with sexual misconduct, while Marjorie McIntosh has suggested that interest in such cases was growing in the equivalent courts of smaller urban communities at the end of the fifteenth century.⁶⁶ However in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century there are grounds for arguing that the interest in sexual misconduct was not shared by the majority of the jurors in the city wardmotes, who were more preoccupied with dirt and physical nuisances in their everyday environment and willing to respond enthusiastically with presentments on such issues by the 1420s. The preoccupation with sexual misconduct was at that stage more an elite concern and primarily restricted to the court of aldermen and their associates (including Chaucer).

So what might we to conclude from all this? First that there was a manipulation of the processes of urban government, at least in London, which resulted from a closing down of the political agenda as matters deemed of greater political importance, such as the regulation of the economy and the governance of the crafts, were reserved to higher courts. Here we can see the creation of an idea of political economy that was reserved to a higher public sphere in contrast to a domestic economy that could safely be left to discussion by the 'little people' in local (or neighbourhood) politics. This fundamental divide was to continue to characterize the political government of the urban economy down to modern times.

Second, that the 'little people' in the neighbourhood courts were left with what had been the relatively minor business of the regulation of environmental nuisance within their political sphere. Nevertheless they were inventive in their use of what law remained to them and they were highly selective and creative in the ways in

which they used these mundane matters to create a popular form of citizenship. This was quite different from the more graduated and exclusive forms of official citizenship employed in the mayor's court. It depended less on the concept of an official franchise and rested more on codes of acceptable and neighbourly behaviour made visible through conduct but also through the maintenance of property, including the streets and public spaces of the ward. Thus this popular citizenship was rather more inclusive than the more rigorous tests for election to a franchised elite of freemen of the city, which were maintained by the higher civic courts and guilds. It also cemented a form of politics rooted in neighbourliness in which the street was the crucial space in which common interests were forged and maintained even, sometimes, against the official civic authorities themselves.

Third, that in the 1420s we are allowed a glimpse of how the neighbourhood's interest in their built and social environment differed from that of their superiors. Already by the 1380s the mayor and aldermen had a moralizing agenda. They were concerned about sexual misconduct, and stories of such misconduct are recorded in detail in the records of the aldermen's court. There is little evidence that this moralizing agenda was shared at a neighbourhood level until much later in the fifteenth century. Instead we might tentatively posit that the post-plague interest of the lesser Londoner in the physical cleanliness of their city streets was not loaded with symbolic meaning. The people of the ward courts were interested in cleanliness and tidiness for its practical value, and with good effect.⁶⁷ This was a rational view that was not necessarily saturated with moral symbolism, and produced continual debate about the relationship between individual householders and the common good of the neighbourhood as represented in their maintenance of the built environment. Above all the variation in records from similar neighbourhood institutions over time and between places, of what participants in these courts were interested in, supports the impression of a dynamism in the articulation of popular opinion at neighbourhood level that is ill served by overgeneralization about the prevailing ideology of civic government in later medieval England seen only from a top-down perspective.

The rise of nuisance law as a vehicle for popular, grass-roots politics between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries provided a forum for the popular voice that was to remain an important outlet for local and even national politics into the modern era. As records of such neighbourhood courts become more abundant in the later

fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, we can see that nuisance law provided a versatile framework for community politics as neighbourly concerns and attitudes changed.⁶⁸ Too often the business of the neighbourhood courts in England's towns has been dismissed as mundane, medieval attitudes to street cleaning have been dismissed as ineffectual, and popular engagement with ideas of cleanliness and environmental regulation have been too narrowly interpreted as either merely pragmatic or purely symbolic. In fact all these explanatory frameworks oversimplify and underestimate the importance of the regulation of nuisance as a dynamic and elastic discourse. 'Nuisance' enabled local communities to shape and give meaning to their lived environment and also to use that environment to shape the social relationships through which individuals became members of society. The city street emerged as the major site, both real and imagined, for popular politics in later medieval England.

Notes

- 1 I would like to express my gratitude to my colleague Dr Nicola McDonald. We originally developed this theme together in joint seminar papers both in York and at the New Chaucer Society meeting in New York in 2006. In particular Nicola introduced me to the works of Carlo Crivelli and of Virginia Woolf on city streets.
- 2 Sarah Rees Jones, 'Thomas More's *Utopia* and medieval London', in Rosemary Horrox and Sarah Rees Jones (eds), *Pragmatic Utopias, Ideals and Communities, 1200–1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 117–35.
- 3 Sarah Rees Jones, 'Civic literacy in later medieval England', in Marco Mostert (ed.), *Writing and the Administration of Medieval Towns: Medieval Urban Literacy I*, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 27 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), pp. 219–30.
- 4 Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 35–43; Sheila Lindenbaum, 'London texts and literate practice', in David Wallace (ed.), *Cambridge History of Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 284–309; Shannon McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex and Civic Culture in Late Medieval London* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Frank Rexroth, *Deviance and Power in Late Medieval London*, trans. Pamela E. Selwyn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Marion Turner, *Chaucerian Conflict: Languages of Antagonism in Late Fourteenth-Century London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- 5 For discussion of approaches to popular culture in the Middle Ages and its historiography see John Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief in Medieval Europe* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005).

- 6 Sarah Rees Jones and Felicity Riddy, 'The Bolton Hours of York: female domestic piety and the public sphere', in Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (eds), *Household, Women and Christianities in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 215–60.
- 7 Giles of Rome, *The Governance of Kings and Princes: John Trevisa's Middle English Translation of the De regimine principum of Aegidius Romanus*, ed. David C. Fowler, Charles F. Briggs and Paul G. Remley (New York: Garland, 1997), pp. 164–8; Sarah Rees Jones, 'Public and private space and gender in medieval Europe', in Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 246–61.
- 8 Caroline M. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People 1200–1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 57–60.
- 9 Kathryn Reyerson, 'Urban economies', in Bennett and Karras (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender*, pp. 295–310 (304–5).
- 10 John Schofield, *Medieval London Houses* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 61–93; Jane Grenville, *Medieval Housing* (London and Washington: Leicester University Press, 1997), pp. 157–93.
- 11 Mary Whiteley, 'Public and private space in royal and princely châteaux in late medieval France', in Annie Renoux (ed.), *Palais royaux et princiers au Moyen Âge* (Le Mans: Publications de l'Université du Maine, 1996), pp. 71–5; Amanda Richardson, 'Gender and space in English royal palaces c. 1160–c. 1547: a study in access analysis and imagery', *Medieval Archaeology*, 47 (2003), 131–65; Sarah Rees Jones, 'Women's influence on the design of urban homes', in Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (eds), *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 190–211; Shannon McSheffrey, 'Place, space, and situation: public and private in the making of marriage in late-medieval London', *Speculum*, 79 (2004), 960–90.
- 12 John Schofield and Geoffrey Stell, 'The built environment 1300–1540', in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 1: 600–1500 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 378; David Bowsher et al. (eds), *London Guildhall: An Archaeological History of a Neighbourhood from Early Medieval to Modern Times*, Museum of London Archaeology Service monograph 36, 2 vols (London: Museum of London Archaeology, 2007), vol. 2, pp. 181–224, 352–81.
- 13 Henry Thomas Riley (ed.), *Memorials of London and London Life* (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1868), p. 480; Inquisition into the actions of John of Northampton (TNA, KB 27/507), transcribed in Edgar Powell and George Macauley Trevelyan (eds), *The Peasants' Rising and the Lollards* (London: Longman, Green & Co., 1899) pp. 27–38.

- 14 Lyndal Roper, "The common man", "the common good", "common women": gender and meaning in the German Reformation commune author(s)', *Social History*, 12:1 (1987), 1–21; Karras, *Common Women*.
- 15 P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Pigs and prostitutes: streetwalking in comparative perspective', in Katherine J. Lewis, Noël James Menuge and Kim M. Phillips (eds), *Young Medieval Women* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 172–93.
- 16 John Gower, *Confessio amantis*, 5:2497, in *The Complete Works of John Gower*, ed. George Campbell Macaulay, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899–1902).
- 17 Felicity Riddy, 'Mother knows best: reading social change in a courtesy text', *Speculum*, 71:1 (1996), 66–86; P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Masters and men in later medieval England', in Dawn M. Hadley (ed.), *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (London: Longman, 1999), pp. 56–70.
- 18 Schofield, *Medieval London Houses*, pp. 99–105.
- 19 Geoffrey Chaucer, 'Troilus and Criseyde', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).
- 20 Barry Windeatt, *Troilus and Criseyde*, Oxford Guides to Chaucer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 50–71.
- 21 Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde* 2, lines 1185–98.
- 22 Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde* 2, lines 1247–56.
- 23 Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde* 5, lines 519–618.
- 24 I am grateful to Nicola McDonald for composing and permitting me to use this sentence.
- 25 *Here begynmeth the boke of Troylus and Creseyde newly printed by a trewe copye* (Emprynted at London: In Fletestrete by Rycharde Pynson printer vnto the kynges noble grace, [1526?]). In the edition published by the Kelmscott Press in 1896, Morris adapted the frontispiece used in 1526 but obscured the window with a curtain and by reducing the walls of the house to a symbolic stretch of stonework and setting the whole within a woodland environment entirely dissolved the urban character of Pynson's original.
- 26 National Gallery, London, UK, www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/jan-van-eyck-the-arnolfini-portrait. Accessed 27 June 2015.
- 27 *Liber albus: c*, ed. H. T. Riley (London: Richard Griffin, 1861), pp. 32–5; *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls ... of the City of London ... AD 1323–1482*, ed. A. H. Thomas and P. E. Jones, 6 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926–61), vol. 4, pp. ix, 115–41; Caroline Barron, 'Lay solidarities: the wards of medieval London', in Pauline Stafford, Janet L. Nelson and Jane Martindale (eds), *Law, Laity and Solidarities: Essays in Honour of Susan Reynolds* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 218–33; Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, pp. 191–7.
- 28 *The London Assize of Nuisance, 1301–1431: A Calendar*, ed. Helena M. Chew and William Kellaway, London Record Society 10 (London: London Record Society, 1973), pp. xix–xxxiv.

- 29 Schofield, *Medieval London Houses*, pp. 99–105.
- 30 *London Assize of Nuisance*, p. 180, no. 652.
- 31 *Liber albus*, pp. 241, 287–92, 483.
- 32 While London was twice or three times the size of Norwich the relatively rare survival of such neighbourhood records means that these are the two main cities (as opposed to smaller towns) that can be compared on this basis in the medieval period. York's surviving wardmote records from the Tudor period are the subject of Pamela Beatrice Hartshorne, 'The street and the perception of public space in York, 1476–1586', PhD thesis (University of York, 2004).
- 33 *Leet Jurisdiction in the City of Norwich during the XIIIth and XIVth centuries*, ed. William Hudson (London: Quaritch, 1892); Sarah Rees Jones, 'The regulation of "nuisance": civic government and the built environment in the medieval city', in Maria do Carmo Ribeiro and Arnaldo Sousa Melo (eds), *Evolução da paisagem urbana sociedade e economia* (Lisbon: CITCEM, 2012), pp. 283–94.
- 34 Counting the instances of cases presented in the records, as summarized in [Tables 5.1](#) and [5.2](#), is not straightforward. In some cases lists of individual offenders were presented and have been counted, but in many other cases the jurors would simply present 'all the hucksters' or 'all the ale sellers', making the exact numbers imprecise, at best.
- 35 15 per cent of London presentments related to hucksters and regrators, 6 per cent to foreigners trading as if freemen or outside the frankpledge, 3 per cent to the assizes of bread and ale, and less than 2 per cent to other trading offences and trading by aliens. Many craft offences were reported in Norwich, but only one, rather unusual, craft offence was reported in London (the priest John Scarle as a false physician, see below).
- 36 Ernest L. Sabine, 'City cleaning in medieval London', *Speculum*, 12:1 (1937), 19–43; Derek Keene, 'Rubbish in medieval towns', in Alan R. Hall and Harold K. Kenward (eds), *Environmental Archaeology in the Urban Context* (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1982), pp. 26–30; Dolly Jørgensen, 'Cooperative sanitation: managing streets and gutters in late medieval England and Scandinavia', *Technology and Culture*, 49:3 (2008), 547–67; Carole Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies: Communal Health in Late Medieval English Towns and Cities* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2013).
- 37 It is also important to recognize that this set of surviving London ward court records for 1421–2 is unusual and has survived because it was copied verbatim into the plea and memoranda rolls of the central city courts held in the Guildhall. It is quite possible then that a particular concern with street cleanliness at that time caused the records to be compiled and preserved in a particular form. Most ward court records seem to have been kept by ward officials and have not survived.
- 38 Sarah Rees Jones, 'Household, work and the problem of mobile labour: the regulation of labour in medieval English towns', in James

- Bothwell, P. J. P. Goldberg and W. M. Ormrod (eds), *The Problem of Labour in Fourteenth-Century England* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2000), pp. 133–53; Sarah Rees Jones, 'The household and English urban government', in Myriam Carlier and Tim Soens (eds), *The Household in Late Medieval Cities: Italy and Northwestern Europe Compared* (Leuven: Garant, 2001), pp. 71–88.
- 39 *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls*, vol. 4, pp. 117–18.
- 40 *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls*, vol. 4, p. 127.
- 41 *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls*, vol. 4, pp. 119–20; C. Jamison, *The History of the Royal Hospital of St Katherine* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952).
- 42 *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls*, vol. 4, pp. 121–2.
- 43 *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls*, vol. 4, pp. 117, 124.
- 44 Rees Jones, 'The household and English urban government', pp. 85–6.
- 45 London, TNA, KB 27/507.
- 46 *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls*, vol. 4, p. 127 (parish of St Leonard).
- 47 Despite the frequency of ordinances concerning the offence of foreigners trading as freemen among craft and city ordinances, out of fifty surviving sets of presentments from parishes and wards in London for 1421–2 just nine include presentations of a total of twenty-one 'foreigners' (non-freemen) for buying and selling as if they were freemen but not paying lot and scot (city taxes), or for being without the frankpledge. A particularly large number of these (nine) were presented in the parish of St Mary-at-Hill, perhaps suggesting a particular agenda in one of London's wealthier parishes. *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls*, vol. 4, pp. 128–9; Clive Burgess, 'Shaping the parish: St Mary at Hill, London, in the fifteenth century', in John Blair and Brian Golding (eds), *The Cloister and the World: Essays in Honour of Barbara Harvey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 246–86. 'Foreigner' in the fifteenth century meant 'not a freeman of the city'. The term used for those born outside the kingdom of England was 'alien'.
- 48 Ruth Bird, *The Turbulent London of Richard II* (London: Longmans, Green, 1949); Pamela Nightingale, 'Capitalists, crafts and constitutional change in late fourteenth-century London', *Past and Present*, 124 (1989), 3–35; Lindenbaum, 'London texts and literate practice', pp. 284–309; Turner, *Chaucerian Conflict*.
- 49 Riley (ed.), *Memorials*, pp. 526–7; Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 122, 127, 129–46.
- 50 John M. Najemy, 'Civic humanism and Florentine politics', in James Hankins (ed.), *Renaissance Civic Humanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 75–104.
- 51 Richard Maidstone, *Concordia: The Reconciliation of Richard II with London*, trans. A. G. Rigg, ed. David R. Carlson (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications for the Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages, 2003).

- 52 Maidstone, *Concordia*, lines 79–101. This may well provide a deliberate counter to the memory of the occasion in 1384 when John of Northampton, as part of his bid to seize power, lined up his followers (allegedly 500 men from various guilds) on either side of the street in order to intimidate the civic party, who had to make their way down the middle of them. TNA, KB 27/507.
- 53 Maidstone, *Concordia*, lines 206–7.
- 54 Maidstone, *Concordia*, lines 250–60.
- 55 Caroline M. Barron, ‘Richard Whittington: the man behind the myth’, in A. E. J. Hollaender and William Kellaway (eds), *Studies in London History Presented to Philip Edmund Jones* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1969), pp. 197–248; William Kellaway, ‘John Carpenter’s *Liber albus*’, *Guildhall Studies in London History*, 3:2 (1978), 67–84; Margaret Aston, ‘Bishops and heresy: the defence of faith’, in *Faith and Fire: Popular and Unpopular Religion, 1350–1600* (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), pp. 73–94; Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, pp. 1–7, 259–63.
- 56 Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, pp. 1–7; Helen Carrel, ‘Food, drink and public order in the London *Liber albus*’, *Urban History*, 33 (2006), 176–94.
- 57 See note 27.
- 58 In 1486 Carlo Crivelli painted *The Annunciation with Saint Emidius*, in which the Holy Spirit pierces the Virgin’s womb through a small window-like aperture in a town house. In the street outside the citizens, a small child and the town’s patron saint all gather to view the Annunciation and the eye is drawn down a perfect streetscape to a garden in the far distance. The painting celebrated the town of Ascoli winning a degree of civic autonomy from Pope Sixtus IV in 1482. The National Gallery, London, UK. www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/carlo-crivelli-the-annunciation-with-saint-emidius. Accessed 27 June 2015.
- 59 The citizens of Thomas More’s *Utopia* were blessed by living in harmony with nature through the use of reason, not yet revelation.
- 60 Sheila Lindenbaum, ‘Ceremony and oligarchy: the London mid-summer watch’, in Barbara A. Hanawalt and Kathryn L. Reyerson (eds), *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 171–88; Pamela M. King, *The York Mystery Cycle and the Worship of the City* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2006); Samantha Riches, *St George: Hero, Martyr and Myth* (Stroud: Sutton, 2005), pp. 101–39.
- 61 From fifty sets of presentations in London in 1421–3 just nine sets included presentations relating to sexual misconduct. In some cases individual offenders were named, in other cases generic accusations were made, so the numbers are very approximate.
- 62 Rexroth’s discussion of the ward court records focuses exclusively on cases of social and sexual misconduct: Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, pp. 198–216.

- 63 Perhaps the best way to illustrate the ways in which these two cases have captured contemporary imagination is through Google, a simple search of which for John Rykener reveals 1,760 hits including blogs and both popular and academic publications. For the discovery of the original trial materials see David Lorenzo Boyd and Ruth Mazo Karras, 'The interrogation of a male transvestite prostitute in fourteenth-century London', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 1 (1995), 459–65; David Lorenzo Boyd and Ruth Mazo Karras, 'Ut cum muliere: a male transvestite prostitute in fourteenth century London', in Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero (eds), *Premodern Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 99–116. Elizabeth Moring is less popular on Google. Her case is published in Riley (ed.), *Memorials*, pp. 484–6. Authors discussing either or both cases include Glenn Burger, Jeffrey Cohen, Carolyn Dinshaw, Ruth Mazo Karras and Jeremy Goldberg, 'John Rykener, Richard II, and the Governance of London', *Leeds Studies in English*, forthcoming.
- 64 *Calendar of Letter-Books of the City of London: Letter Book I*, ed. Reginald R. Sharpe (London: J. E. Francis, 1909), pp. 279–86; McSheffrey, *Marriage*, pp. 157–61.
- 65 *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls*, vol. 4, p. 127; Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, p. 203.
- 66 As a suburban ward in the east of London there may also have been a particular concentration of concern about poorer women selling sexual services in this neighbourhood: Karras, *Common Women*, p. 26; McSheffrey, *Marriage*, p. 159; Rexroth, *Deviance and Power*, p. 194; Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England 1370–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
- 67 This chapter was written before the publication of Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, which similarly argues for a serious interest in cleaning up cities after the plague.
- 68 McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior*; Hartshorne, 'The street and the perception of public space'; Sandy Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues: Speech and Gender in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex and Civic Culture*.

Getting there: wayfinding in the Middle Ages

Ruth Evans

*There is an old story in which a couple of tourists, driving on an English country road and hopelessly lost, stop to ask directions from a local inhabitant who happens to be sitting on a fence by the road. 'Excuse me,' they ask, 'What's the best way to get to Canterbury?' He thinks for a while. 'Well,' he finally says, 'if I were you, I wouldn't start from here.'*¹

How did road travellers in the later Middle Ages find their way from one part of a country to another? From one town to another? And within unfamiliar towns and cities? How did they plan their journeys? What aids did they use for getting to their destinations? Such questions seem obvious, yet there has been little systematic attempt by road historians to answer them. There is no book-length, or even article-length, discussion of medieval wayfinding. Information about this topic is hard to come by because wayfinding is a practice that of its nature is not likely to leave any traces. The purpose of this chapter is to survey some of the evidence for medieval wayfinding and to provide some initial answers to these questions.² I will draw on a number of different disciplines, including urban studies and space studies, in order to understand the cultural and cognitive aspects of medieval wayfinding practices.³ I will argue that in the absence of the technological and material aids that we now take for granted medieval travel presumed a culture of human co-operation that is very different from that of today. This chapter is also a contribution to the neglected social history of the everyday in the European premodern era.⁴

Most historians and literary scholars take it for granted that medieval travellers had no trouble finding their way around. J. J. Jusserand, for example, in his classic study of medieval wayfarers,

I wish to thank Valerie Allen, Emma Campbell, Antony Hasler, Paul B. Newman, Richard Oram and Mark Gregory Pegg. Translations into English in this chapter are mine, unless otherwise stated.

never refers to the subject.⁵ Discussion of wayfinding is entirely absent from another classic early study of medieval road travel, G. H. Martin's 'Road travel in the Middle Ages'.⁶ And Terence Bowers, who argues that the fifteenth-century East Anglian housewife, pilgrim and would-be mystic Margery Kempe excelled at being a traveller, does not once mention the practicalities of how Kempe planned her journeys or found her way from one place to another.⁷ Yet, as Valerie Allen notes, when Kempe is abandoned yet again by her travelling companions on her arrival in Dover and has to set out for Canterbury alone, her rueful comment '*þat sche knew not þe wey*' suggests that 'as often as not a travelling companion means having a guide; to travel alone ... means having to ask the way'.⁸

Today we make use of numerous printed, electronic and material navigational aids, either for planning a journey or for directions once en route: maps, Michelin guides, AA Route Planners, AAA TripTik travel planners, AT&T Navigator, satnavs, Google Maps on handheld electronic devices, GPS co-ordinates, motorway signs, road and motorway numbers, country and county boundary markers, signposts, street names and house numbers. Medieval European travellers did not have any of these aids. Wayfinding technologies were meagre or non-existent: there were no road signs and no names written on the walls of houses to indicate streets, and the few medieval maps that survive were not principally designed as wayfinding tools.⁹ We know that Kempe procured guides, but she must also, we infer, have relied on asking other people for directions.

Yet the lack of wayfinding tools and the possibility that one might get lost are seldom seen as problematic by medieval travellers. As Allen observes, 'No doubt Margery often took a wrong turn or needed to ask directions, but if she did it plays no part in the narrative.'¹⁰ For a frequent traveller, Kempe's silence about wayfinding is remarkable. And this is typical of the period. As Michael Prestwich observes about royal journeys through England in the later Middle Ages, 'There is little evidence that finding the way was ever a difficulty.'¹¹ Similarly, Dylan Foster Evans, discussing the ceaseless travelling of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Welsh poets in search of patrons, remarks that 'on the whole, travel was taken for granted, and was not a particular cause for concern from the poets' point of view'.¹² He continues:

As a result the fundamental question of how they found their way from patron to patron is difficult to answer. Did they make use of

guides? Probably, given that the fourteenth-century Merionethshire poet Madog Dwygraig boasts in one poem of being able to travel through south Wales *heb fyneigiaid ffyrdd* ('without road guides'). Were they able to manage by asking for assistance from those they met en route? Or did they have other means of finding the way? To what extent was route-finding a part of their training?¹³

The answers to these questions, as Foster Evans recognizes, are not readily available and the written evidence is hard to interpret. Historical, documentary and literary sources rarely provide empirical information about wayfinding. Prestwich mentions a letter written early in Edward II's reign that refers to 'the high road via Ware, Royston and Huntingdon', a set of waypoints that suggests a knowledge of the route on the part of the writer.¹⁴ But how would the king know which route was more direct than another? On what basis would he prefer one route over another? Whom did he consult? As Prestwich notes:

The officials of the household must ... have possessed a wealth of geographical knowledge. Royal messengers in particular would have extensive experience of travel, and could have provided advice. It is easy to imagine that local people would have provided information as to how best to travel from one village to the next, but a much wider awareness of distances, roads, and river-crossings would have been necessary to plan journeys effectively.¹⁵

Prestwich identifies three different sources of knowledge about the routes taken by the king: royal messengers, local people and a more nebulous category, unasccribed to any human agent(s): 'a much wider awareness'. But who possessed this awareness? And from where was it derived?

Sources that might be expected to furnish this information are largely silent. The letters exchanged by members of the Paston family in the fifteenth century record their many journeys by road around their estates in East Anglia, and between those estates, London and the home counties, but provide no evidence of route planning or wayfinding.¹⁶ In 1456, for example, John Paston I requested that his cousin Margaret Paston, together with John Dawbeney and Richard Call, go and comfort his tenants during a critical dispute with the Duke of Suffolk about the rights to the manors of Drayton and Hellesdon: 'I wold ye myth ryd [might ride] to Heylison and Drayton and Sparham, and tari [tarry] at Drayton and speke with hem [them].'¹⁷ The letters do not record how Margaret and her companions found their way to these places.

Even granted that the primary purpose of the letters was to conduct family business, getting around posed no apparent difficulty to the Pastons, their servants or their messengers. One of the most famous records of a medieval English virtual road trip, Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, also says nothing about how the pilgrims found their way from Southwark to Canterbury. Harry Bailly's interjections only serve to define the route by naming the places they are passing through: "Lo Depeford [Deptford], and it is half-wey pryem! / Lo Grenewych [Greenwich], ther many a shrewe is inne!" (I.3906–7); "Loo, Rouchestre stant heer faste by!" (VII.1926).¹⁸ The Summoner observes that they will be passing through "Sidyingborne" [Sittingbourne] (III.847). And Chaucer the pilgrim notes that a canon joins the group at 'Boghtoun under Blee' (VIII.556).

But these place names are symbolic: they record an ideational journey, not an actual pilgrimage. This symbolic aspect is reinforced by the illustrations in the Ellesmere manuscript of the *Tales*; with the exception of the portraits of Chaucer, the Shipman, the Canon's Yeoman, the Second Nun, the Nun's Priest and the Monk, all of whom are shown riding on patches of what appears to be grass, the images portray the pilgrim riders as idealized figures, floating on the space of the page, not ambling on solid roads.¹⁹ As Paul Hindle remarks, Chaucer 'takes it for granted that his readers know the road and he never mentions any difficulties of travel'.²⁰ 'Difficulties of travel' of course covers much more than wayfinding (as Kempe's anxieties about being raped and as the existence of charms against being robbed on the highway testify²¹), but wayfinding is seldom, if ever, seen as worthy of comment, either by historical travellers or by modern commentators on those travellers.²²

If the ordinary road is overlooked now because, in the words of Joe Moran, the cultural historian of the quotidian, it is 'just part of the invisible landscape of the everyday',²³ then wayfinding too, both now and in the past, is seen as 'just part of the invisible landscape of the everyday': common to us all yet banal enough to go unremarked. Moreover, there are no phenomenological accounts of travel by medieval travellers, like those by John Leland in the sixteenth century or Daniel Defoe in the eighteenth.²⁴ The relative silence of the medieval documentary and literary records on the topic of wayfinding poses significant methodological problems: in trying to establish wayfinding practices, we must use whatever evidence we can find but we must also, inevitably, speculate.

Who is travelling?

The travellers on medieval roads are not only pilgrims, crusaders, kings, ambassadors and chroniclers, such as Edward I, Geoffrey Chaucer and Gerald of Wales,²⁵ papal nuncios, heroic adventurers like Marco Polo and John of Plano Carpini (the Franciscan sent in 1245 by Pope Innocent IV as an ambassador to the Mongols),²⁶ but also merchants, aliens, pardoners, mendicant friars and preachers, monks, bishops, sheriffs, justices, bailiffs, summoners, minstrels, tumblers, itinerant labourers, corpse bearers, pedlars, cobblers, hucksters, quack herbalists and social ‘marginals’: beggars, prostitutes, thieves, outlaws, lepers and the peripatetic disabled.²⁷

There is also the anonymous, silent army of messengers, letter carriers and servants constantly plying between one part of the country and another on their masters’ and mistresses’ business, and gleanings, either deliberately or incidentally, vital intelligence about the travel plans of others. Writing to her husband John Paston I in 1465, Margaret Paston anxiously notes:

The Duk of Suffolk and bothe þe duchessys schal com to Claxton thys day, as I am informyd, and thys next weke he schal be at Cossey; whethere he wol come ferthere hyddyrward [towards this place, i.e. Hellesdon, which the Duke had earlier attempted to attack] ore not I wot not yit [I do not yet know]. It is seyð þat he schold com hyddyre; and yit hys men seyð here on Monday þat he cleymyd [claimed] no tytyl to thys place.²⁸

The passive verbs – ‘as I am informyd’, ‘It is seyð’ – attest to the workings of this anonymous intelligence-gathering force and show that even without GPS tracking systems it was quite possible in the Middle Ages to discover others’ travel plans.

There must, however, have been some who escaped – or wished to escape – this culture of surveillance, and who never asked the public for directions. John Rykener, a late fourteenth-century London-based sex worker who occasionally passed as a woman under the name of Eleanor, was caught once (to our knowledge), dressed in women’s clothing, having sex with one John Britby in a stall in Soper’s Lane in the city of London, but he/she seems otherwise to have got around undetected: the legal document that records his/her case states that he/she had sex with a rector called Philip near Bishopsgate; with three scholars in the marshes round Oxford; with two Franciscans, a Carmelite friar and six foreign men at the Swan in Burford, Oxfordshire; with a certain Joan and two foreign Franciscans at Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire; and with three chaplains in the

lanes behind St Katherine's Church by the Tower of London.²⁹ How did Rykener find his/her way around? And did he/she ask directions while dressed as a woman?

Route planning

How were medieval road trips planned? Writing to his younger brother from Calais, John Paston II mentions a letter that he sent on 22 January 1473 via Thomas Elys from Calais, on the understanding that Elys 'sholde haue ben in Norffolk wyth-in vj or vij dayes afftre'.³⁰ John Paston calculates Elys's trip to take six or seven days, but he nevertheless cannot be sure, since he remarks, 'but now I vndrestand that thys letter [the one he is writing] is lyke to be wyth yow as sone as it [the first letter]'.³¹ The calculation of a journey – and the timing of a person's arrival with the arrival of a letter – was, then, potentially uncertain, which must have made planning difficult.

What then of medieval guidebooks as sources to be consulted for route planning? *The Book of John Mandeville* (c. 1400), ostensibly a vade mecum for pilgrims to Jerusalem based on personal experience, is probably entirely fictive and not based on any actual travel undertaken, since it is a patchwork of some three dozen sources.³² Although Mandeville's *Book* begins with a set of directions for travelling from England to Constantinople, these directions constitute only the grossest of indications of the route. As the author says, 'Do not expect me to list all the places – cities, towns, castles – that have to be passed through, for my account would be too long, but only some countries and principal places through which one must pass to go the right way.'³³ Is 'the right way' the most direct way, or the traditional way? But in any case the landmarks, cities and rivers are included for verisimilitude, not route planning.

A network of personal communication must have been vital for planning trips: the Italian Franciscan Salimbene recounts how Brother John of Plano Carpini was constantly asked out to dinner to recount the tales of his adventures to the Great Khan in Outer Mongolia, dinners where information about routes would inevitably be conveyed, even though this information does not survive.³⁴

Which way? Asking directions

The most common means for finding one's destination was to ask someone for directions,³⁵ exemplified by this stark locution in the

English–Greek phrase book in William Wey’s fifteenth-century Rough Guide for pilgrims: ‘Tel me the way: *Dixixomo strata*.’³⁶ Caxton’s *Dialogues in French and English* (c. 1480–83), an English–French phrase book that provides a ‘social and ethical curriculum’ for the aspiring merchant classes,³⁷ contains an instructive section that deals with ‘les parolles que chescun / Pourra apprendre pour aler’, that is, ‘the wordes that eueryche / May lerne for to goo’ [the words that everyone can learn in order to find their way]:³⁸

Quand vous estes meus	Whan ye be meuyd	when you are inclined
Pour aller vostre voyage,	For to goo your viage,	to make your journey
Et vous ne scaues le chemin,	And ye knowe not the waye,	If you don’t know the way
Si le demandes ainssi,	So axe it thus,	here’s how to ask directions. ³⁹

‘I goo to saynt James,
To our lady of boloyne.

At whiche gate shall I goo out,

And at whiche hande
Shall I take my way?’

‘On the right hande,

Whan ye come to a brigge,

So goo ther over;

Ye shall fynde a lytill waye

On the lyfte honde,

Whiche shall brynge you in a contre

There shall ye see vpon a chirche

Two hye steples;

Fro thens shall ye haue

But four myle

Vnto your loggyng.

There shall ye be well easyd

For your money,

And ye shall haue a good Jnne.’⁴⁰

‘I am going to Santiago
to the shrine of Our Lady of
Boulogne.

by which gate shall I leave
the city?

bridge

left hand

into a region

where you will see

only four miles

refreshed

a good place to stay

This dialogue implies that it was usual for pilgrims not to know their way, at least, when in a foreign country, that they would expect to have to ask for directions, and would most commonly do so when in a city. They would need to know where to exit the city, whether to turn right or left, and what landmarks to notice (a bridge, a church with two tall steeples). It is likely that the first thing a stranger looked for on her arrival in an unknown city would be an inn or tavern.⁴¹ Travellers in general must have quickly gained a sense of distances, since there was no other way of computing a distance of four miles except from experience.

Medieval wayfinding almost always necessitated the co-operation of other human beings: a historical form of what the cognitive anthropologist Edwin Hutchins calls ‘naturally situated’ cognition.⁴² This co-operation was required because although most people knew their immediate environs – writing to the Vicar of the Abbott of Cluny in 1430, William Paston I notes that ‘in my cuntré, but a myle fro þe place where I was born, is þe povre hous of Bromholm’⁴³ – they did not know areas outside their immediate town or city. Important exceptions included the nobility, since they moved between estates and went on military campaigns, some clergy, including monks, many merchants and of course pilgrims.⁴⁴ Crusading was one chief source of knowledge of directions: ambassadors were informed about routes by clerks and personal contacts.⁴⁵ A Paston family memorandum dated 31 July 1478, and corrected by William Paston II, records the following information about the benefice of Oxnead that shows an aristocratic family’s knowledge of non-local geography:

ther is a good markett town callyd Alysham with-in ij myle off the parsonage.

And the cyté off Norwych is with-in vj myle off the parsonage.

And the see is with-in x myle off the parsonage.⁴⁶

One might imagine such knowledge furnishing directions for a traveller.

Guides: medieval fixers

Second only to asking for directions was to hire a guide, which is implied in the comment in Chaucer’s *Reeve’s Tale* that ‘John knew the wey – hem nedede no gyde.’⁴⁷ Cities reached by major routes were relatively easy to find, but travel through forests and along roads that were known only to local inhabitants (like Chaucer’s

savvy scholar John), especially in distant countries and in military situations, very often depended on guides.⁴⁸ In one amusing incident of 1346, recounted by the fourteenth-century French historian Jean Froissart, Edward III asked his French prisoners the best way to cross the River Somme. One prisoner, Gobin Agace, traitorously but wisely volunteered that he knew of a suitable crossing, La Blanchetaque ford. Edward rewarded him richly 'with a hundred gold nobles and a good horse'.⁴⁹ In the Holy Land, after the fall of the Crusader states and the return of Moslem rule, pilgrims employed local Moslems as translators and guides.⁵⁰ The early thirteenth-century *marruccis* or *marons* of the Alps were specialized paid guides.⁵¹ Edward I regularly used guides on his itineraries, but somewhat surprisingly seems to have rarely hired them for night journeys.⁵²

Kempe often uses the services of guides, including a Saracen, 'a welfaryng [good-looking] man' (a rare appraisal of a guide's physical appearance), whom she paid a groat (four pence) to take her up Mount Quarantine; Saracens around Jerusalem; a broken-backed Irishman named Richard in Rome and Bristol; and 'a man which hite Patryk' when she leaves Leicester to go 'to-Lyncoln-ward'.⁵³ Patryk involvement with her as a guide is instructive. In Leicester, she does not seek him out; rather, he has been sent there by Thomas Marchale, a fellow-pilgrim of Kempe's, who had been briefly imprisoned in Leicester, to make sure she hadn't been burnt as a heretic, with instructions to take her on his horse to his house at Melton Mowbray to meet up with Marchale. Marchale probably paid Patryk, although this is unrecorded. Patryk risks imprisonment by the Mayor of Leicester when he returns to the city to try to fetch Kempe's staff and scrip. Patryk's role is more that of an emissary and charitable friend (he calls her 'mother') than a guide. But on a previous occasion Kempe had hired Patryk as a paid guide at Santiago de Compostela, and she hires him again to continue her journey north when she is finally released from three weeks' confinement by the Mayor of Leicester: 'Pan sche hyryd þe forseyd man Patryk to gon with hur in þe cuntre & so went þei forth to Ȝorke'.⁵⁴ Ever troublesome, Kempe incurs the displeasure of the Archbishop of York when she accuses him of being a wicked man, and eventually (in desperation?) he asks for a man to lead her out of his diocese. A 'good, sad [sober] man' from his household volunteers, and when the Archbishop offers him the not inconsiderable sum of five shillings the man demands a noble (six shillings and eightpence), but the Archbishop will not go so high.

One wonders how often guides haggled over their fees and under what circumstances. Kempe hires the same man herself when she journeys from York to Bridlington to see her confessor, ‘þat good man which was hir ledar browte hir owt of þe town & þan went þei forth to Brydelyngton to hir confessor’.⁵⁵

Guides were not always easy to come by. In his *Historia Francorum*, discussing the advance of Count Raymond of Toulouse through Slavonia on the first crusade, Raymond d’Aguilers marks that ‘The inhabitants of the region were so boorish and rude that they were unwilling to trade with us, or to furnish us guidance.’⁵⁶ Arriving in Dover from Calais, Kempe finds no one willing to travel with her, so ‘sche toke hir wey to-Cawntyrbere-ward be hir-self a-lone, sory & heuy in maner þat sche had no felaschep ne þat sche knew not þe way’.⁵⁷ Guides might be unreliable. In Danzig Kempe meets a man who offers to accompany her to Wilsnack, but as they leave Stralsund, ‘[þ]e man þe which was hir gyde was euyr aferd [afraid] & wold euyr a forsakyn [constantly wanted to leave] hir cumpany’.⁵⁸

Evidence is not always easy to interpret. Was ‘the boy’ that attended the warden of Merton College, Oxford in 1325 on his visitation to the college’s Surrey manors employed as a guide?⁵⁹ An item recorded by John de Vilers, the bursar of Merton College, in his expenses from September 1330 until April 1331 is ‘for ... a boy going back [*redeuntis*] to Brokesby, sixpence’, but that was probably for leading the horses.⁶⁰

Although guides were usually paid, every urban lay confraternity and rural monastery had statutes outlining the obligation to provide assistance to travellers as an act of Christian charity.⁶¹ Kempe alludes to this obligation when she reassures her confessor that instead of returning on her own from Germany she will call upon the services of a hermit attached to her church at Lynn: “I hope he wil for owr Lordys lofe gon & comyn wyth me [I expect for the love of God that he will come and accompany me].”⁶² One of the duties of road hermits, from the fourteenth century onwards, was to act as guides.⁶³ The cave-dwelling hermit at Cratcliffe, Derbyshire, near Haddon Hall, may have guided travellers on the prehistoric trackway known as the Portway which ran close by.⁶⁴ Medieval Europeans categorized direction-giving not as a service or intangible commodity, as we do today, but as the hiring of a paid companion or as a corporal act of mercy to the stranger.

In the absence of exterior aids such as satnavs, memory must have played an important part in wayfinding. Thomas Norton’s *Ordinal*

of *Alchemy* (c. 1477) implies that directions might be lengthy and would therefore need to be memorized: 'Now haue I tagth you euiroy thyng bi name / As men tech othir the way to walsynghame; / Of euiroy village, watire, b[r]yge and hyll, / Wherby wise men their Iournay may fulfill.'⁶⁵ A traveller would have to retain considerable amounts of information. 'Rote' – as in rote memory and learning by rote – and 'route' appear to be etymologically connected. According to the *OED*, although the origin of *rote* (n.¹) is 'uncertain', it may be derived from 'post-classical Latin *rota* musical composition in the form of a round ... with reference to the repetition of information'. Mary Carruthers connects its etymology not only to Latin *rota*, 'wheel', but also to French *rote*, 'way, route', an association she makes via the *Rota Virgili*, a hand-held mnemonic diagram for teaching rhetoric.⁶⁶ The post-medieval word *routine* (*OED*, n. and adj., 'a more or less mechanical or unvarying way of performing certain actions or duties'), is derived from *route*, a 'way or course taken in moving from a starting point to a destination'. One travels just as one learns to memorize the route: routinely. Remembering and travelling, like roads and writing, are linked.⁶⁷

Pilgrims on the holodeck: maps and itinerary maps

Not all of the earliest medieval maps, however, were designed as vade mecums for real travellers – or at least we cannot be sure. One example is the unique itinerary maps created by Matthew Paris for the monks of St Albans Abbey some time after 1250, which depict a detailed route from London through France and Italy to Rome, the Holy Land and Jerusalem.⁶⁸ The maps show the journey in strip-like format: as a straight line running from the top of the page to the bottom, with each town on the route represented by a stylized drawing of a building or cluster of buildings. On the maps in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 26 London has St Paul's, flanked by the Tower and the Palace of Westminster (unlabelled), with Lambeth Palace and Southwark opposite, various gates, the wall and a bridge, with labels giving the name of the town, and sometimes the river that the town is on, placed at intervals on either side of the straight line.⁶⁹ The routes are not to scale and there are no indications of distances.⁷⁰ They look like the elongated strip maps designed by travel clubs; their stylized representation of isolated landmarks resembles that of Archie Archambault's quirky maps, which use circles to present simplified environmental images of US cities and districts.⁷¹

The function of Matthew Paris's maps, however, was to provide an immersive devotional experience: they made possible a virtual, not a real, pilgrimage and supplied prosthetic memories of places never visited. These maps enabled the monks of St Albans to pleasurably anticipate their 'journey' and to travel virtually by moving 'from one intermediate station to another', with a focus less on the final destination than on the serial unfolding of interim destinations, each of which could be dwelt on with compassion and the expectation of divine reward,⁷² as recommended by Abbot Daniel of Russia, in his account (c. 1106–8) of his pilgrimage to Jerusalem: 'For if anyone hearing about these holy places should grieve in his soul and in his thoughts for these holy places, he shall receive the same reward from God as those who shall have traveled to the holy places.'⁷³ The thirteenth-century Ebstorf world map, originally in the Benedictine abbey of Ebsdorf, Germany, and no longer surviving except in a nineteenth-century copy, offered a similar immersive and virtual experience: in its upper right-hand corner is the phrase *Que scilicet non parvam prestat legentibus utilitatem, vianibus directionem rerumque viarum gratissime speculationis directionem* [it evidently offers no small utility for readers: direction for travellers and pointing out of the most pleasurable view of things of the road].⁷⁴ The Ebstorf map and Matthew Paris's maps are thus less cartographic (concerned with the mapping of Cartesian space) than topographic (concerned with narrative representation), a further link between roads and writing.⁷⁵ There also exist unillustrated itineraries listing the intermediate towns between two distant points, usually giving some estimate of distances along the way and putting special emphasis on major towns and places of pilgrimage.⁷⁶ The fourteenth-century Genoese Venetian-based map-maker Pietro Vesconte made the first map of Palestine as an attempt to show the actual geography of the country, but this does not necessarily mean that his map was used for wayfinding.⁷⁷

One of the best-known English medieval road maps, the Gough map (c. 1360), was originally intended not only for travelling but as 'a document of colonial administration and propaganda ... one designed above all to engage the imagination of early English *imperial* travellers – in particular those aristocratic and clerical elites most invested in Edward [I]'s project of asserting overlordship in Britain'.⁷⁸ Yet Gough is a map that is 'suited ... to wayfaring generally', because unlike Matthew Paris's strip maps it shows Britain in a geographically recognizable form, even though a number of familiar highways (the route from London to Canterbury, for example)

are missing.⁷⁹ As Hindle argues, ‘the sheer number of towns shown would enable the traveller to plan a journey, even if an actual route was not shown’.⁸⁰ Margaret Wade Labarge notes that ‘from its large size and the nail holes around its edge ... [it appears that the Gough map] was designed to give practical help to actual travellers and that it was probably nailed up in some central place where it could be easily consulted’.⁸¹ Had Sir Gawain been a real knight, he could have consulted Gough for his journey from Camelot ‘into þe Northe Walez’ en route to the Green Chapel, on which he kept ‘[a]lle þe iles of Anglesay on lyft half [his left side]’, and crossed ‘[o]uer at the Holy Hede [Holywell], til he had eft bonk [again reached the shore] / In þe wyldrenesse of Wyrle [the Wirral]’. This route is clearly delineated on Gough, which shows Anglesey (*Insula de Anglesey*), Bangor, Conwy, Abergele, Rhuddlan and Flint (*flynt*).⁸²

Despite the strong tendency by historians and cultural critics to freeze the meanings of surviving medieval maps ‘in accord with [their] production and initial display contexts’,⁸³ a mid-sixteenth-century map based on Gough was used by Thomas Butler, a provincial merchant, for wayfinding.⁸⁴ Perhaps a fourteenth-century merchant also used its predecessor (or a lost copy) to plot his travel.

On the road: signs and landmarks

The meatspace of the medieval road offered little material support for wayfinding. There were no milestones in medieval Britain, other than those that had survived from the Roman period. These were largely useless to medieval travellers because many Roman roads were in disrepair and routes had changed, so information on milestones was inaccurate.⁸⁵ There are no surviving European medieval signposts or fingerposts indicating distances or directions, and there is no evidence in contemporary records that they existed; they arise in the second half of the seventeenth century as the result of legislation and with the advent of modern cartography.⁸⁶ It is likely that there was no need for them because travellers were accustomed to ask directions.⁸⁷ But crosses were used to mark routes through difficult terrain, and from the Anglo-Saxon period onwards, in England, to indicate places of sanctuary. The medieval right of sanctuary granted asylum to criminals in churches, abbeys and other sanctified places.⁸⁸ Crosses thus had a symbolic as well as a wayfinding function, one that is absent from the informational

purpose of modern highway signage. On their journey from York to Bridlington, Margery Kempe and her husband are famously wrangling about her desire not to have sex any more, and John is getting nowhere. As they ‘cam be a cros’, John ‘sett hym down vndyr þe cros, clepyng [hugging] hys wyfe vn-to hym’, and attempts to strike a bargain: “‘Margery, grawnt me my desyr, & I schal grawnt 3ow 3owr desyr.”’⁸⁹ John’s choice of a cross as his roadside negotiation site and Kempe’s recording of this fact demonstrate that crosses do not just mark the way but serve as places of intercession, negotiation and sanctuary. The Kempes, as we know, succeeded in reaching a deal.

The cross that the Kempes stopped by may have been a parish or estate boundary marker, or one of four medieval boundary markers for the sanctuary of Saint John of Beverley in the East Riding of Yorkshire.⁹⁰ According to Norman Trenholme, sanctuary-seeking in medieval England was widespread.⁹¹ Crosses inscribed with the word SANCTUARIUM were usually erected at a distance of one mile to mark the way to a sanctuary and to guide fugitives, as they were around the abbeys of Hexham and Beverley. There were eight sanctuary crosses placed around the North Yorkshire city of Ripon in the thirteenth century, each one situated one mile from the minster.⁹² The last remaining of these crosses, Sharow Cross, can still be seen at the junction of Sharow Lane and Dishforth Road in the village of Sharow, marking the southern limits of the sanctuary.⁹³ Church doors would be marked by rings or knockers to indicate sanctuary, such as the sanctuary ring on a door of Notre-Dame de Paris (France) and on a door of Durham Cathedral.⁹⁴

A landmark was originally the boundary of a country, estate or farm, or an object set up to mark a boundary line (*OED*, 1.a), the earliest recorded instance (c. ninth century) being in Cynewulf’s *Juliana*.⁹⁵ The first documented use of ‘landmark’ in today’s sense, that is, an ‘object in the landscape, which, by its conspicuousness, serves as a guide in the direction of one’s course’ (*OED*, 2) is not until 1570; its original usage was in coastal navigation. Yet medieval road travellers made much use of landmarks to guide their journeys. Paul Newman cites ‘churches, crossroads, and prominent natural features’ in the country, and ‘public fountains, distinctive buildings, and other similar points’ in cities.⁹⁶ David Palliser mentions Roman earthworks (the York street name Aldewerke (c. 1180–90) bears witness to such a feature), crosses and hills.⁹⁷ Church steeples provided easy landmarks for identification, as is evident from a conversation that Froissart records as having taken place with

his friend and patron Edward le Despenser, in which Edward asks him: “Froissart, do you see that great town with a high steeple?”⁹⁸

Learn fast phrases in French to get around!

An anonymous English–French phrase book preserved in its earliest form in MS Harley 3988 provides a rich source of information about fourteenth-century wayfinding. Written for an insular audience (probably in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk) in 1396 and known as *La Manière de langage qui enseigne à parler et à écrire le français*, it contains model conversations for English merchants travelling to France.⁹⁹ In one dialogue, a young English nobleman, journeying on horseback, stops to ask his way:

quant il venra a boute de ville, il demandera a un pute veile ou a un aultre ainsi: ‘Ma commere, qu’est la droit chemyn vers Aurilians?’ ‘Mon signeur, je vous dirai: vous chivalcherez tout droit par cest chemyn, et quant vous venrez ou valye, vous verez un poy devant vous une haye, et la vous trouverez deux chemyns et une crois. Si lerrez la crois a la main droit, et prendrez la chemyn au main senestre; et puis vous trouverez sur vostre chemyn un grant boais ou il y a grant cop des larrons, si comme l’en dit, et pour ce, mon signeur, gaitiez vous bien de eux, car ils font biaucop de mals. Monsieur Dieux vous conduist et vous donne honneur et joye de quanque vous aimez.’ ‘Belle dame, a Dieu soiez.’ *Vel sic*. ‘A Dieu vous comande.’

[when he comes to the end of the town, he will ask an old whore or another person thus: ‘My good woman, what’s the direct road to Orléans?’ ‘Sir, I’ll tell you: ride straight down this road and when you come to a valley you’ll see a hedge a short distance in front of you, and there you’ll find two roads and a cross. Leave the cross to your right, and take the road on your left, and then you’ll find on the road a big wood where there is a great number of thieves, so they say, and for that reason, sir, watch out for them, for they do a great deal of harm. May the Lord God guide you and give you honour and joy of whatever it please you.’ ‘Madam, may you be in God’s keeping.’ *Or this*: ‘I commend you to God.’]¹⁰⁰

Even though we must recognize the artificial and even fanciful nature of this dialogue (the prostitute reference may have been added to titillate its male aristocratic readers), it provides evidence of what we might now call conversational ‘norms’ between strangers when asking for and providing directions: the imperatives are just like modern direction-giving – go down there, take the road on your left; respectful greetings and goodbyes are used; landmarks

(a hedge, a cross, a wood), and even potential dangers, are pointed out. We might go so far as to say that the practice of prostitutes wearing identifiable clothing might have singled them out as reliable direction-givers.¹⁰¹

The following dialogue from the same text provides more evidence of the politeness formulas exchanged between strangers, and of the presence of specific landmarks along routes (crosses were evidently plentiful, and the 'greener' (less used?) road is an interesting detail). Clearly, the pointing out of landmarks and the use of distances were common in direction-giving. Major highways seem to have been easily recognizable (because of their size, or the numbers of travellers on them?):

Et après manger il demandera a la dame de l'ostel son chemyn vers tel lieu tout ainsi: 'Dame, me ditez vous quant bien y a il de cy a Tamps.' 'Mon signeur, s'il vous plaist, il n'y a que dis lieues bien petites.' 'Pourrai je y estre encore nuyt?' 'Oïl dea, mon signeur, bien aise.' 'Et puis, quant bien y a il d'illoques a Aurilians, et quel chemyn tenrai je?' 'Mon signeur, vous chivalcherez tout parmy la ville de Tamps vers la porte saint Loy, et la vous en isserez, et quant vous serez bien demy lieue de la, vous y trouverez deux chemyns, une crois et une voilette: si prendré la plus grant chemyn et vert, et la crois vous lerez a la main droit. Adoncques vous vous traiheriez vers la foreste de Chartres; et quant vous y serez, tost après vous aprocherez une ville que n'en appelle Biauchastel en les prees, et doncsques vous en aurez vostre haute chemyn vers Aurilians tout droit devant vous, si que vous ne pourrez ja forvoier, senon que vous vuillez.'

And after dinner he will ask the lady of the inn for directions to where he's going, like this: 'Madam, could you tell me how far it is from here to Étampes?' 'Sir, if you please, it's only ten short leagues.' 'Can I get there before nightfall?' 'Of course, sir, very easily.' 'And then how far is it from there to Orléans, and what road do I take?' 'Sir, ride through the town of Étampes towards the Saint Eloi gate, and go through it, and when you are a good half a league from there, you'll come to two roads, a cross and a hamlet; take the larger and greener of the roads, and leave the cross to your right. Then proceed towards the forest of Chartres, and when you get there, soon after that you will come to a town called Biauchastel-en-les-prés, and then you'll see the highway to Orléans straight in front of you, so that you won't be able to go wrong, unless you really want to.'¹⁰²

These directions do not of course represent a real journey. As P. Meyer remarks, there is no trace of the name of St Eligius (St Eloi) in Étampes; he has been unable to find a place called Biauchastel-en-les-prés on the road from Étampes to Orléans;

there is no forest of Chartres, and Chartres is not on the route from Étampes to Orléans: ‘tout l’itineraire est un peu fantaisiste [the whole itinerary is a little fanciful]’.¹⁰³ This phrase book could not be used for travel planning.

The presence of clocks in some late medieval towns meant that travellers would have been able to estimate travel times:

quant il venra ou my lieu de la ville, il demandera du primer home qu’il encontrera, ainsi: ‘Mon ami,’ *vel sic*, ‘Biau sire,’ *vel sic*, ‘Biau filz, qu’elle heure est-il maintenant?’ *Vel sic*: ‘Qu’est ce qu’a sonnee de l’oriloge?’ *vel sic*, ‘Quant bien a il sonnee de l’oriloge?’

‘When he gets to the middle of the town [Orléans] he [the traveller] will ask the first man he meets like this: ‘My friend,’ or this, ‘Good sir,’ or this, ‘Fair young man, what time is it now?’ or this, ‘What hour has the clock struck?’ or this, ‘How many bells has the clock struck?’¹⁰⁴

The following dialogue provides rare insights into house-identification and the fact that strangers sometimes lost their way:

‘Mon amy, me ditez vous ou demeure mon signeur Guillam Mountendré?’ ‘Ne vous bougez biau sire, je le vous dirai: Veiez vous bien ou il y a un grant moustier ci aval a bout de ce rue?’ ‘Oïl, mon très doulz amy, je le vei bien.’ ‘De par Dieu doncques, quant vous serez la vous traïherez vers l’occident a darrere le moustier, si vous passerez une ruete, et tost après vous verez devant vous en la haute rue une haute maison et une grosse pierre gisant a l’huys, et aussi des cordels pendans as fenestres a travers la rue, et la desur deux cinges couranz et esbatans ensamble.’ Et quant il sera pres de son hostel, encore est il si sot qu’il ne sait bien droit aler avant, qu’il en a une autre fois demandee la voie. Doncques, dit il ainsi: ‘Mon amy, me ditez vous, demeure ici mon signeur Guillam Mountendré?’ ‘Nonil dea! Par quoy alez vous de la? Vous avez forvoïé biau cop. Venez vous de ça et je vous menrai tan que vous serez droit a l’huys de sa maison.’

‘My friend, can you tell me where Sir William Mountendré lives?’ ‘Stay there, good sir, and I’ll tell you. Do you see that large monastery down there at the end of this street?’ ‘Yes, my very dear friend, I see it clearly.’ ‘So, by God, when you get there bear west behind the monastery, you’ll go past an alley, and soon after that you’ll see in front of you on the main street a tall house with a huge stone lying by the door and also ropes suspended from the windows across the street, and on the ropes two monkeys running and fighting each other.’ And when he is close to his lodging, once again he is such a sievehead that he isn’t sure whether to go straight ahead, so that he has to ask his way again. So he says thus: ‘My friend, tell

me, does Sir William Mountendré live here?’ ‘Indeed, he doesn’t! Why are you going over there? You’ve gone a long way out of your way. Come over here and I’ll take you right up to the door of his house.’¹⁰⁵

And the next dialogue shows how a pilgrim might negotiate for an unpaid guide – and that guides might be willing but otherwise indisposed:

‘Hé! Mon amy, il me faut aler en pelerinage pour sercher saint Thomas de Cantersbers. Veuillez vous aler avecque moy?’ ‘He! Biau sire, pleüst a Dieu que je pourroï aler avec vous, car je m’en alasse doncques tres voulantiers, mais vous me faut avoir a present pour escusee.’ ‘Par quoy biau sire?’ ‘Vrayement, sire, mon chival me ferist l’autre jour si malement que je ne puis mye aler. Ore regardez comment ma jambe en est tout enflee ...’

‘Hey! My friend, I must go on a pilgrimage to seek St Thomas of Canterbury. Would you like to go with me?’ ‘Hey! Good sir, may it please God that I could go with you, for I would very willingly go along, but you will have to excuse me just now.’ ‘For what reason, fair sir?’ ‘Truly, sir, my horse kicked me so badly the other day that I am completely unable to go with you. Just look at how my leg is all swollen ...’¹⁰⁶

The main purpose of these model conversations is not to demonstrate actual routes but to offer practice in various formulaic and polite modes of address that will enable the English traveller to interact with strangers in a strange land. Some of the details may therefore be fanciful – and indeed some of the scenes (live monkeys playing on ropes¹⁰⁷) are pure fantasy, the product of a sense that language-learning needs to be spiced up to be memorable.

Signage¹⁰⁸

Urban wayfinding in the west today is heavily dependent on the knowledge of one system in particular: the combination of a street name and a house (or business) number. We need only to know which sides of the street are the even and odd numbers, and the direction – up or down – of the numbers in order to be able to identify the location of a specific address. There were no house numbers in European towns.¹⁰⁹ And there were no street names written on the streets themselves, even though the legal and cartographic evidence shows that urban streets in medieval England began to acquire names from the ninth century.¹¹⁰ Street names

did not function, as they do today, to orient the stranger passing through them. They served as legal markers in cases of house rentals, road repairs and land disputes (such as the encroachment of roads on other people's property boundaries or 'burgage plots'¹¹¹), and they often identified trades (tanners, shoemakers, butchers) or urban locations: 'la ruelle du Trou-Punais' (Lane of the Rubbish Dump) in Paris, for example. But names could live on long after a trade had moved elsewhere; for example, Winchester's Flesmangerestret (Butchers' Street) retained this name after the butchers moved out of the district some time between 1100 and 1300.¹¹² A traveller to Winchester after 1300, told to go down Flesmangerestret, would not see any butcher's shops to signal they were in the right street.

The most common form of medieval house identification in large cities, from the thirteenth century onwards, was house signs.¹¹³ These were painted boards hanging from a bracket, or paintings or carvings hung above the entrance or propped against the wall; the carvings might be painted.¹¹⁴ But not every house had a sign, and commercial shop signs cannot easily be distinguished from those that identified a particular house in a street.¹¹⁵ The earliest house signs were of saints, such as the image of St Julien the Hospitaller at 42 rue Galande in Paris, the oldest surviving Parisian house sign conserved in situ.¹¹⁶ In Paris animal signs were wildly popular: house signs recorded in rue Galande and its environs include the 'Maison des deux signes' (Two Swans), the 'Maison du cheval rouge', the 'Maison des lyons', 'La Corne de cerf' (Stag's Horn) and 'les Étuves de la Queue du Reynard' (Reynard's Tail Public Baths).¹¹⁷ House signs rarely remained in place for more than fifty years.¹¹⁸ The house of St Julien was formerly known as the 'Maison de la Heuze' (House of the Boot).¹¹⁹ Signs were organized on the basis not of personal identity but of occupation and social position.¹²⁰

By the end of the fifteenth century house signs were no longer in use, but trade signs, such as the pharmacist's cross, were on the rise as markets expanded.¹²¹ Shops throughout late medieval Europe were identified by the signs for what merchants produced rather than by the names of the sellers. At first, some merchants suspended as signs the actual objects that they made: a loaf of bread, a shaving bowl, or a pot. A bunch of greenery wound into a circle indicated a tavern.¹²² Some signs were 'quasi-religious': roast meat sellers, for example, used the sign of St Lawrence's grill and innkeepers the sign of St Martin, but most were representations of a

métier: a shoe, or a fish, like the sign of the salmon in Chartres.¹²³ As Michael Camille observes, ‘medieval signs functioned in radically different ways from modern ones’, because today most signs are commercial, usually contain words and are lit up at night.¹²⁴ Evidence suggests that late medieval legislation was passed to make brewers hang up signs to make them easily visible to passing ale conners, that is, inspectors of the quality of ale. It is reported that Florence North, a brewer of Chelsea, was ‘presented’ (that is, a charge was brought against her) in 1393 for not displaying a sign, but evidence from other English cities does not suggest that this was a universal legal requirement.¹²⁵ No regulations of this kind were in force in Leicester, for example, before the year 1570.¹²⁶

Wayfinding in a medieval city was made possible not by signage but by what the city planner Kevin Lynch calls ‘the environmental image’: ‘the generalized mental picture of the exterior physical world that is held by an individual’.¹²⁷ Strangers in, and inhabitants of, medieval Florence, for example, would accumulate an environmental image based on ‘one or more intensive foci, towards which other things seem to “point”’.¹²⁸ Locational references were made in terms of the *canti* (street corners): ‘loggias, lights, coats of arms, tabernacles, important family houses, and key stores, especially pharmacies’.¹²⁹ The environmental image of other medieval cities must have been similarly organized: one thinks of ‘the Jewerye’ in Chaucer’s *Prioress’s Tale* (VII.489), or the ‘pothecarie’ at which the youngest of the three rioters in *The Pardoner’s Tale* (VI.852) buys his rat poison. As with so many medieval wayfinding practices, the relative lack of signage presumes not only historically specific environmental images but a culture of co-operation and of good neighbourliness, in which travellers had to ask for directions and where there was a Christian obligation to provide them.¹³⁰

Conclusion: medieval wayfinding as spatial practice

Wayfinding is a spatial practice: it tells us about a culture’s mapping of abstract space (a modern not a medieval concept¹³¹) and the relationship of people to that space. Wayfinding is simultaneously a technology, a memorial practice and a cognitive competency.¹³² Although Henri Lefebvre’s seminal historical study of space never asks how the many networks of commerce, exchange and communications in the Middle Ages were negotiated by wayfinders,¹³³ his definition of spatial practice is nevertheless instructive: ‘The

spatial practice of a society', he asserts, 'secretes that society's space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it. From the analytic standpoint, the spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space.'¹³⁴ As this chapter demonstrates, medieval wayfinding defines and presupposes medieval space, and vice versa, in historically specific ways. No single person knew all of the routes across a country or between countries; rather, this information was distributed across individuals in different regions, who supplied the local knowledge that enabled a traveller to move from one region to another, just as the signal of a cellular telephone network moves from one base transceiver station to another. We might therefore think of geographical regions in the Middle Ages as having been understood by contemporaries in spatio-temporal terms, as the physical space that can be travelled in one day by foot or on horseback.

Finding one's way in the Middle Ages relies on human co-operation across time and space, and is therefore a historical form of 'naturally situated' cognition,¹³⁵ in which the locus of knowledge is not a single individual or a single repository, such as a map or GPS device, but derives from multiple sources, largely (in the Middle Ages) supplied by other humans but also residing in manuscript itineraries or schematic maps, and in material objects in the environment, such as prominent landmarks.¹³⁶ Group cognition differs significantly from individual cognition, and everyday cognition is not a system that is found in textbooks, which may account for the sparseness of evidence for medieval wayfinding. This is further complicated by the fact that spatial practice involves both 'competence' and 'performance':¹³⁷ a combination of theoretical knowledge (cognition) *and* the ability to act on that knowledge, which is subject to the complexities of embodiment, such as getting lost. This distinction recalls Ferdinand de Saussure's opposition between *langue* and *parole*: between knowing an abstract (linguistic) system and actualizing that knowledge (speaking, getting there) in everyday situations.

Wayfinding in the Middle Ages, as today, can also be understood in terms of what Bruno Latour calls an 'actor-network', in which objects (church steeples, house signs, the road itself) as well as people can be 'actors', and in which social structures cannot be taken as givens that explain human behaviours: rather, Latour argues, the social must be reassembled by investigating the ties that bind all actors – humans and

objects – together.¹³⁸ In the 1396 English–French phrase book that I discussed above we see the social being reassembled through the ties of wayfinding, as humans relate both to each other and to the objects in their environment. And what we know about medieval wayfinding practices suggests that the environment for travellers was divided up into smaller and more manageable pieces and interconnections – what Lynch describes as paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks – that constituted a hierarchy of spatial knowledge, but with significant differences from today.¹³⁹

Notes

- 1 Victor Burgin, *In/Different Spaces: Place and Memory in Visual Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1996), p. 1.
- 2 In this chapter, I do not provide new archival evidence but draw on existing scholarship, including sources that have not previously been mined for evidence of wayfinding.
- 3 Somewhat surprisingly, the *OED* has no entry for ‘wayfinding’ or ‘way-finding’. Although it is often asserted that the term was first coined in 1960 by the urban planner Kevin Lynch, I am not convinced from Lynch’s usage that he was the first to use it. Lynch defines wayfinding as ‘a consistent use and organization of definite sensory cues from the external environment’: *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960), p. 3.
- 4 The history of the medieval quotidian is relatively unmapped. But Antonia Gransden discusses ‘the trivialities of everyday life’ in her ‘Realistic observation in twelfth-century England’, *Speculum*, 47:1 (1972), 29–51 (30). See also D. Vance Smith, *Arts of Possession: The Middle English Household Imaginary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), which links memory with the rhythms of the medieval household and the everyday. On the mapping of the contemporary everyday, including urban road use, negotiating traffic and getting around, see Joe Moran, *Reading the Everyday* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).
- 5 J. J. Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages*, trans. Lucy Toulmin Smith (London: Ernest Benn, 1889, repr. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2003).
- 6 G. H. Martin, ‘Road travel in the Middle Ages’, *Journal of Transport History*, n.s. 3 (1975–6), 159–78.
- 7 Terence Bowers, ‘Margery Kempe as traveler’, *Studies in Philology*, 97:1 (2000), 1–28.
- 8 Valerie Allen, ‘As the crow flies: roads and pilgrimage’, *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 25 (2008), 27–37 (33).

- 9 Michael Prestwich notes, for example, that Edward I owned at least one world map, but its purpose was largely decorative: 'The royal itinerary and roads in England under Edward I', [Chapter 8](#) of this volume, p. 192. Margaret Wade Labarge observes that '[m]emory and capable servants would take the place of maps and signposts for signposts were not common – or very useful in a generally illiterate society – while maps ... were often unavailable or merely ornamental': *Medieval Travellers: The Rich and Restless* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982), p. 15.
- 10 Allen, 'As the crow flies', 33.
- 11 Prestwich, 'The royal itinerary', p. 192.
- 12 Dylan Foster Evans, 'Conquest, roads and resistance in medieval Wales', [Chapter 12](#) of this volume, p. 279.
- 13 Dylan Foster Evans, 'Conquest, roads and resistance in medieval Wales', [Chapter 12](#) of this volume, p. 279.
- 14 Prestwich, 'The royal itinerary', p. 190.
- 15 Prestwich, 'The royal itinerary', p. 192.
- 16 *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Norman Davis, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).
- 17 *Paston Letters and Papers*, p. 133.
- 18 Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).
- 19 See *The Canterbury Tales: The New Ellesmere Chaucer Facsimile (of Huntington Library MS EL 26 C9)*, ed. Daniel Woodward and Martin Stevens (Tokyo: Yushodo and San Marino, CA: Huntington Library Press, 1995).
- 20 Paul Hindle, *Medieval Roads and Tracks* (Princes Risborough: Shire, 1998), p. 13.
- 21 Kempe declares that 'sche was euyr a-ferd [always fearful] to a be rauschyd er [of being raped or] defilyd': *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Sanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen, EETS os 212 (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 241/9–10. On charms against thieves, see Jack R. Baker, 'Christ's crucifixion and "Robin Hood and the Monk": a Latin charm against thieves in Cambridge University Library, MS Ff.5.48', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 14:1 (2008), 71–85.
- 22 Two exceptions are Labarge and Paul Newman: see Labarge, *Medieval Travellers*, Chapter 1 'The shape of their world' and Chapter 2 'Point of departure', pp. 1–14, 15–32; and Paul B. Newman, 'Travel aids', *Travel and Trade in the Middle Ages* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011), pp. 87–93.
- 23 Joe Moran, *On Roads: A Hidden History* (London: Profile, 2010), p. 2.
- 24 John Leland, *The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the Years 1535–1543*, ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith, 5 vols (London: G. Bell, 1906–10); Daniel Defoe, *A Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* [1724], 2 vols (London: Peter Davis, 1927).

- 25 Gerald toured Wales in 1188 with Archbishop Baldwin: see Hindle, *Medieval Roads and Tracks*, p. 21 and Labarge, *Medieval Travellers*, p. 6.
- 26 Labarge, *Medieval Travellers*, p. 2; Jean Verdon, *Travel in the Middle Ages*, trans. George Holoch (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), pp. 232–3.
- 27 As Verdon points out: ‘Travel was ... not an anomaly in the Middle Ages ... [L]arge numbers of people were constantly travelling’ (*Travel in the Middle Ages*, p. 90). The term ‘marginals’ is from Christopher Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England c. 1200–1520* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 20. The most comprehensive study of types of medieval travellers is Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life*. Gypsies did not appear in England until the fifteenth century: Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life*, p. 93.
- 28 *Paston Letters and Papers*, p. 310.
- 29 For the original Latin document, see David Lorenzo Boyd and Ruth Mazo Karras, ‘The interrogation of a male transvestite prostitute in fourteenth-century London’, *GLQ*, 1 (1995), 459–65. The English translation is in Ruth Mazo Karras and David Lorenzo Boyd, ‘“*Ut cum muliere*”: a male transvestite prostitute in fourteenth-century London’, in Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero (eds), *Premodern Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 101–16 (pp. 111–12).
- 30 *Paston Letters and Papers*, p. 455.
- 31 *Paston Letters and Papers*, p. 455.
- 32 *The Book of John Mandeville with Related Texts*, ed. and trans. Iain Macleod Higgins (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2011), p. xiv.
- 33 *Book of John Mandeville*, p. 7.
- 34 Labarge, *Medieval Travellers*, p. 2.
- 35 Newman, *Travel and Trade*, p. 88.
- 36 Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life*, p. 235; William Wey, *The Itineraries of William Wey, Fellow of Eton College, to Jerusalem, A.D. 1458 and A.D. 1462, and to Saint James of Compostella, A.D. 1456*, ed Bulkley Bandinel, with intro. by Albert Way, Roxburghe Club 76 (London: J. B. Nichols and Sons, 1857), p. 102.
- 37 Lisa H. Cooper, ‘Urban utterances: merchants, artisans, and the alphabet in Caxton’s *Dialogues in French and English*’, *New Medieval Literatures*, 7 (2005), 127–61 (132).
- 38 William Caxton, *Dialogues in French and English*, ed. Henry Bradley, EETS es 79 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, 1900), p. 2.
- 39 From here onwards, I give only the Middle English text, and not the French.
- 40 Caxton, *Dialogues*, pp. 48–9.
- 41 Yves D. Papin, ‘Les enseignes médiévales: un langage pittoresque et universel’, *Archéologia*, 69 (1974), 37–42 (40).
- 42 Edwin Hutchins, *Cognition in the Wild* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), p. xii.

- 43 *Paston Letters and Papers*, p. 13.
- 44 Newman, *Travel and Trade*, p. 88.
- 45 Labarge, *Medieval Travellers*, pp. 1–2.
- 46 *Paston Letters and Papers*, p. 178.
- 47 Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, *Riverside Chaucer*, I.4020.
- 48 Verdon, *Travel in the Middle Ages*, p. 278. For guides, both good and bad, see Klaus Belke, 'Roads and travel in Macedonia and Thrace in the middle and late Byzantine period', in Ruth J. Macrides (ed.), *Travel in The Byzantine World: Papers from the Thirty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, Birmingham, April 2000 (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2002), pp. 73–90.
- 49 Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey Brereton (London: Penguin, 1968), pp. 81–2; Verdon, *Travel in the Middle Ages*, p. 41.
- 50 See Friar Felix Fabri, *Once to Sinai: The Further Pilgrimage of Friar Felix Fabri*, trans. H. F. M. Prescott (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1947), p. 21.
- 51 Verdon, *Travel in the Middle Ages*, pp. 39–40.
- 52 For example, in November 1300 payment was made for men to show the king and queen the way from Penrith to Brough; in January 1286 a guide was required to show the king the way to Wimborne in Wiltshire by night: Prestwich, 'The royal itinerary', [Chapter 8](#) of this volume, p. 192.
- 53 Kempe, *Book*, pp. 74/14; 75/15–16; 106/23–4; 117/33–4.
- 54 Kempe, *Book*, p. 119/16–18.
- 55 Kempe, *Book*, p. 128.
- 56 Raymond d'Aguilers, *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*, ed. and trans. John H. Hill and Laurita L. Hill (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1968); English translation by August Charles Krey, *The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eye-Witnesses and Participants* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1921), p. 64.
- 57 Kempe, *Book*, p. 242/31–3.
- 58 Kempe, *Book*, p. 233/16–17.
- 59 Martin, 'Road travel in the Middle Ages', 166.
- 60 *In expensis garcionis redeuntis ad Brokesby, vjd*: Martin, 'Road travel', 175.
- 61 On the payment of guides, Labarge, *Medieval Travellers*, p. 24; on the obligations of religious houses, see Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life*, p. 17. Providing directions is separate from the *trinoda necessitas*, or triple obligation, which included the repair of bridges.
- 62 Kempe, *Book*, p. 226/24–5.
- 63 Rotha Mary Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites of England* (London: Methuen, 1914), pp. 57–8; Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life*, p. 66.
- 64 I owe this reference to Susan Wiseman.
- 65 Thomas Norton, *Thomas Norton's Ordinal of Alchemy*, ed. John Reidy, EETS os 272 (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), lines 3,066–9.
- 66 Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 251–2.

- 67 See Valerie Allen and Ruth Evans, 'Introduction: roads and writing', **Chapter 1** in this volume, pp. 1–3.
- 68 Daniel Connolly, *The Maps of Matthew Paris: Medieval Journeys through Space, Time, and Liturgy* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2009), p. 6. The most elaborate of these maps covers seven pages in CCCC MS 26; a preliminary sketch is in BL MS Cotton Nero D1, and an unfinished version in CCCC MS 16. Another itinerary, the so-called Royal version in BL MS Royal 14 C VII, was made either for Henry II or more likely Edward I and may not have been by Matthew: Connolly, *Maps of Matthew Paris*, pp. 19–20, 22, 173–4.
- 69 See Connolly, *Maps of Matthew Paris*, colour plate I and figs 1–6; Newman, *Travel and Trade*, p. 56.
- 70 Standard measurements did exist in the Middle Ages – many dated back to the Roman imperial system – but there was no pan-European standard. British measurements only became standardized in the eighteenth century, and in Europe were largely due to Napoleon's imposition of a common system. I owe this information to Richard Oram.
- 71 Connolly, *Maps of Matthew Paris*, p. 5. For a brief history of strip maps, see Alan M. MacEachren, 'A linear view of the world: strip maps as a unique form of cartographic representation', *The American Cartographer*, 13:1 (1986), 7–25. For the maps on the Archie's Press website: www.archiespress.com/. Last accessed 12 July 2015.
- 72 Allen, 'As the crow flies', 29.
- 73 Cited in Connolly, *Maps of Matthew Paris*, p. 36.
- 74 Connolly, *Maps of Matthew Paris*, p. 52.
- 75 Valerie Allen, 'Road', *postmedieval*, 4:1 (2013), special issue *Ecomaterialism*, 18–29 (24–5).
- 76 Labarge, *Medieval Travellers*, p. 11.
- 77 Labarge, *Medieval Travellers*, p. 13.
- 78 Daniel Birkholz, *The King's Two Maps: Cartography and Culture in Thirteenth-Century England*, *Studies in Medieval History and Culture* 22 (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 113.
- 79 Birkholz, *The King's Two Maps*, pp. 113–14.
- 80 Hindle, *Medieval Roads and Tracks*, p. 34.
- 81 Labarge, *Medieval Travellers*, p. 11. See also Birkholz, *The King's Two Maps*, p. 83.
- 82 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron (eds), *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 5th edn (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007), pp. 207–300 (234, lines 697–701). For the identifiable place names on Gough, see www.goughmap.org/ and Birkholz, *The King's Two Maps*, p. 116.
- 83 Daniel Birkholz, 'Hereford maps, Hereford lives: biography and cartography in an English cathedral city', in Keith D. Lilley (ed.), *Mapping Medieval Geographies: Geographical Encounters in the Latin West and Beyond, 300–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013),

- pp. 225–49. See also Daniel Birkholz, 'The vernacular map: re-charting English literary history', *New Medieval Literatures*, 6 (2004), 11–77.
- 84 Daniel Birkholz, 'The Gough Map revisited: Thomas Butler's *The Mape of Ynglonnd, c. 1547–54*', *Imago Mundi: The International Journal for the History of Cartography*, 58:1 (2006), 23–47.
- 85 Newman, *Travel and Trade*, pp. 88–9.
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- 87 Newman, *Travel and Trade*, pp. 88–9.
- 88 Norman M. Trenholme, *The Right of Sanctuary in England: A Study in Institutional History*, The University of Missouri Studies vol. 1, no. 5 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1903).
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- 90 Harry R. G. Inglis, 'The roads that led to Edinburgh', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 50 (1915), 18–49 (18).
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- 93 Sharow Cross: www.geograph.org.uk/photo/327850.
- 94 Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life*, p. 78.
- 95 'Ða wæs gelæded londmearce neah ond to þære stowe þær hi stearcferþe þurh cumbolhete cwellan þohtun': Cynewulf, *The Passion of Saint Juliana*, ed. Bernard J. Muir (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), line 635.
- 96 Newman, *Travel and Trade*, p. 88.
- 97 David Palliser, 'The medieval street-names of York', *York Historian*, 2 (1978), 2–16 (4).
- 98 Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life*, p. 41. J. Froissart, *Chroniques*, ed. S. Luce, G. Raynaud and L. et A. Mirot, Société de l'Histoire de France, 15 vols, Livres I–III (Paris, 1869–1975), vol. 1, p. 257.
- 99 The text in Harley 3988 is edited by P. Meyer, 'La manière de langage qui enseigne à parler et à écrire le français', *Revue Critique d'Histoire et de Littérature*, 10 (1870), 387–95. For a critical edition of the text, see A. M. Kristol (ed), *Manières de langage (1396, 1399, 1415)*, Anglo-Norman Text Society, 53 (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1995). For studies of the treatise, see Thérèse Bonin and Josette Wilburn (eds), 'Teaching French conversation: a lesson from the fourteenth century', *The French Review*, 51:2 (1977), 188–96, and J. H. Baker, 'A French vocabulary and conversation guide in a fifteenth-century legal notebook', *Medium Ævum*, 58 (1989), 80–192.

- Parts of the treatise appear in W. C. Firebaugh, *The Inns of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: Pascal Covici, 1924), pp. 153–70. See also Labarge, *Medieval Travellers*, p. 19. As Meyer notes, the author's French is not entirely idiomatic: 'notre auteur, bien qu'il eut voyagé en France, n'est pleinement maître de la langue qu'il manie': Meyer, 'La manière', 379.
- 100 Meyer, 'La manière', 386.
 - 101 On the English regulations regarding clothing for prostitutes, see Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 21–3.
 - 102 Meyer, 'La manière', 394.
 - 103 Meyer, 'La manière', 394.
 - 104 Meyer, 'La manière', 394–5.
 - 105 Meyer, 'La manière', 400–1.
 - 106 Meyer, 'La manière', 401.
 - 107 Or were these rope-operated monkey figures? The park at Hesdin, northern France, created in 1288, included: 'animated rope-operated monkey statues (kitted up each year with fresh badger-fur coats)': Sylvia Landsberg, *The Medieval Garden* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), p. 22.
 - 108 The term 'signage' (*OED* signage, *n.*, first recorded in 1949) means 'Signs collectively, esp. commercial signs or those on public display; the design and arrangement of these.' Although medieval roads and streets were furnished with some visual signs, my use of the term is anachronistic: there were considerable differences between the types and functioning of medieval and modern signs: Michael Camille, 'Signs of the city: place, power, and public fantasy in medieval Paris', in Barbara A. Hanawalt and Michal Kobiak (eds), *Medieval Practices of Space*, *Medieval Cultures* 23 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 1–36 (4).
 - 109 See Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 126. Paris is believed to have been the earliest city in Europe to have house numbers. However, Jeanne Pronteau denies that the numbering of sixty-eight houses situated on the Pont Notre Dame is a precursor of later house numbering; they were used for identification purposes by the administration: Jeanne Pronteau, *Les numérotages des maisons de Paris du xv^e siècle à nos jours*, Publications de la sous-commission de recherches d'histoire municipale contemporaine 8 (Paris, 1966), pp. 61–9.
 - 110 Winchester had five street names by AD 1000: Hindle, *Medieval Town Plans*, p. 32. On medieval street names in Oxford, see 'Street-names', *A History of the County of Oxford*, vol. 4: *The City of Oxford*, Victoria County History of England, ed. Alan Crossley, C. R. Elrington, Eleanor Chance, Christina Colvin, Janet Cooper, C. J. Day, T. G. Hassall, Mary Jessup and Nesta Selwyn (London: Institute of Historical Research, 1979), pp. 475–7; in York, see Palliser, 'The medieval street-names of York'; in London, Eilert Ekwall, *Street-Names*

- of the *City of London* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1954). On Paris, which began to acquire street names in the thirteenth century, see Simone Roux, *Vivre dans une ville au Moyen Age: la naissance d'une civilisation. Textes et documents pour la classe 734* (Paris: Centre National de Documentation Pédagogique, 1997), p. 1.
- 111 Hindle, *Medieval Town Plans*, p. 51.
 - 112 Hindle, *Medieval Town Plans*, p. 32.
 - 113 Papin, 'Les enseignes médiévales', 37; Camille, 'Signs of the city'; Michael Camille, 'Signs on medieval street corners', in Gerhard Jaritz (ed.), *Die Strasse: Zur Funktion und Perzeption öffentlichen Raums im späten Mittelalter* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2001), pp. 91–117.
 - 114 Simone Roux, 'Images de bêtes urbaines', in Elisabeth Mornet and Franco Morenzoni (eds), *Milieus naturels, espaces sociaux: Etudes offertes à Robert Delort* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1997), pp. 229–39 (229).
 - 115 Roux, 'Images de bêtes urbaines', p. 230.
 - 116 Papin, 'Les enseignes médiévales', 38.
 - 117 S. Sophia Beale, *The Churches of Paris: From Clovis to Charles X* (London: W. H. Allen, 1893), p. 223. See also Camille, 'Signs of the city', p. 4; Papin, 'Les enseignes médiévales', 38; and Roux, 'Images de bêtes urbaines', p. 233.
 - 118 Roux, 'Images de bêtes urbaines', p. 233.
 - 119 Camille, 'Signs of the city', p. 3.
 - 120 See Boris Bove, 'La demeure bourgeoise à Paris au XIV^e siècle: bel hôtel ou *grant meson*?', *Histoire urbaine*, 3 (2001), 67–82 (82).
 - 121 Papin, 'Les enseignes médiévales', p. 38.
 - 122 Papin, 'Les enseignes médiévales', p. 40; Michael Camille, 'At the sign of the "Spinning Sow": the "other" Chartres and images of everyday life of the medieval street', in *History and Images: Towards a New Iconography*, ed. Axel Bolvig and Philip Lindley (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp. 249–76 (267).
 - 123 Camille, 'Signs of the city'.
 - 124 Camille, 'Signs of the city', p. 4.
 - 125 John Bickerdyke, *The Curiosities of Ale & Beer: An Entertaining History* (London: Field & Tuer, 1886), p. 215.
 - 126 Charles James Billson, *Medieval Leicester* (Leicester: Edgar Backus, 1920), p. 23.
 - 127 Lynch, *The Image of the City*, p. 4.
 - 128 Lynch, *The Image of the City*, pp. 129–30.
 - 129 Lynch, *The Image of the City*, pp. 129–30.
 - 130 Hindle, *Medieval Town Plans*, p. 32.
 - 131 See Camille, 'Signs of the city', p. 9.
 - 132 On navigational wayfinding at sea as a form of distributed cognition (that is, possessed not by any one individual but by a group, utilizing a variety of material aids), see Hutchins, *Cognition in the Wild*. On

wayfinding as a memorial practice that invokes the landscape as ‘a vast mnemonic system for the retention of group history and ideals’, see Lynch, *Image of the City*, pp. 126–7.

- 133 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 263, 53 and 266.
- 134 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 38.
- 135 Hutchins, *Cognition in the Wild*, p. xii.
- 136 For Hutchins, ‘human cognition is always situated in a complex sociocultural world and cannot be unaffected by it’ (*Cognition in the Wild*, p. xiii), and ‘context is not a fixed set of surrounding conditions but a wider dynamical process of which the cognition of an individual is only a part’ (p. xiii).
- 137 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 33.
- 138 Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- 139 Lynch, *The Image of the City*, pp. 46–90. Lynch claims that paths predominate in today’s environmental images but that in the Middle Ages nodes (‘the intensive foci to and from which [a traveller] is travelling’, p. 47) seem to have been more dominant. The recent award of the 2014 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine to John O’Keefe, May-Britt Moser and Edvard I. Moser for the discovery of nerve cells that constitute an ‘inner GPS’ – that is, a positioning system in the brain that enables us to orient ourselves in space – points to a neurological basis for wayfinding that may account in part for how medieval travellers found their way around without the signage and technological supports that we take for granted today: www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/medicine/laureates/2014/press.html, last accessed 28 June 2015. Nevertheless, the discovery that the brain’s entorhinal cortex forms ‘cognitive maps’ does not do away with the need to explain wayfinding techniques in the past, since the ability to orient oneself in space depends not only on brain function but on specific, historical, distributive cognitive practices.

The function of material and spiritual roads in the English eremitic tradition

Michelle M. Sauer

Religious vocations in the Middle Ages took a wide variety of forms, from the traditional careers of cloistered monks and nuns to more unconventional choices, such as being a hermit or anchorite. While all shared the goal of becoming closer to God spiritually, the ethos and practices of each were different. Monks and nuns took formal vows, identified with an order and lived communally within established houses following established rules. Hermits and anchorites were not required to take formal vows, and often never did, nor did they have to follow a specific rule. These choices also offered a variety of levels of enclosure. Anchorites, for instance, were walled up inside small cells, while monks shared dwellings. However, there is another difference between cloister, seclusion and the anchorhold, one that is sometimes mentioned, but not as deeply investigated.

The ability to move freely without permission and the ability to change residence contributed to the distinctions among religious vocations, and to the function of those vocations within medieval society. Members of monastic orders could move about with permission on prescribed activities, while anchorites took vows of 'stude steadeluetsnesse', meaning 'stability of abode'. Hermits, however, had relative freedom of movement. It is my contention that because of the importance of mobility to the hermit, the image of the road on both a literal and a spiritual level becomes central to the vocation, culminating in the relative proliferation of so-called 'road hermits' throughout the fourteenth century and into the fifteenth. This shift further reflects the changing ideals of community involvement and the increasing importance within late medieval society of manual labour as a form of charitable spirituality. Building upon this, I suggest that the eremitic vocation was reshaped to give it a visible function in society, rather than its being defined by reliance upon contemplation and its by-product

of prayer as the sole means of communal contribution. Hermits' physical labour serves as the medium by which this is accomplished, and, by repairing bridges and roads, hermits prove their value to the community in a highly visible manner, and thus, consistent with their commitment to mobility as part of their spirituality, the road becomes a central part of their vocation.

The development of the eremitic vocation

The historical development of the ideal of the hermit throughout the pre-modern period is reflected in shifting connections between hermits' levels of community involvement and their corresponding kinetic and locational practices. For instance, the varying eremitic vocations can all trace their origins to the Egyptian desert fathers. St Antony of Egypt (251–356 ce) is often credited with being the first hermit, as he gave up a secular life of ease and luxury to retreat into the desert. However, as his hagiographer St Athanasius (c. 296–373 ce) points out, Antony and the others who followed him 'practised the discipline in solitude near their own village'.¹ Antony obviously did not espouse formal vows nor did he follow a formal rule. Instead, his life consisted of self-imposed discipline and prayer, as well as labour with his hands while at prayer. Antony's followers did the same, choosing to live on the fringes of society in a self-restrained fashion. Yet these original hermits were not without community ties. Although they lived a life of solitude, the community still relied on the hermits for assistance, as when the laity travelled to seek out the hermits when help was needed. As Benedicta Ward observes, the hermit was, for example, 'a focus of spiritual power for his neighbors' because '[a]s one who was outside society, disassociated from its petty factions and ambitions, he was a point of appeal, a peace-maker between men'.² These hermits also provided practical as well as spiritual assistance. According to the *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, a number of hermits preserved food-stuffs from their own stores to provide in times of famine or shared gold and silver they had saved from donations.³ In this way, the hermits assisted the lay people of the community without leaving the solitude of their own desert haunts, and thereby were incorporated into the communal structure. Moreover, the significance of manual labour is foregrounded. Not only is it a part of the ascetic life, but also it provides the means for self-sufficiency and charity. The hermits remained mobile in their own settings, often leaving their caves to wander deeper into the desert for contemplation, or

occasionally gathering together for communal worship. However, this mobility did not include approaching the laity; rather, when such interaction took place, it was at the behest of the lay people who needed assistance.

From this original eremitic lifestyle developed the communal monastic lifestyle, as initiated by pioneers including St Martin of Tours (c. 316–97 ce), St Hilary of Poitiers (315–68 ce), St Benedict of Nursia (c. 480–547 ce) and St Honoratus of Arles (c. 350–429 ce). As the communities modelled on their lives grew in number and size, rules were developed both to control the physical life of practitioners and to regulate spiritual expression. Although there were a number of privately drafted rules, St Benedict's Rule (*Regula monasteriorum*, c. 550 ce), became the accepted ideal, and, in C. H. Lawrence's words, 'for many centuries in the medieval West the Rule for Monks composed by St Benedict provided the standard pattern for monastic observance'.⁴ The overall structure of the Rule set up monastic life on the 'family model', with the abbot as father and the monks as brothers. Part of the tradition included the precept *ora et labora* ('pray and work'), and up to five hours of manual labour a day was allowed; however, the Divine Office was God's work, and thus the most significant work of all. Guests were allowed into the monastery and were to be treated courteously, but could not move about freely. Monks could travel with permission, and instructions were provided on how to behave on journeys.⁵ All of these regulations assisted with combining an eremitic life with a communal existence – and as with the desert fathers both allowed, and to some extent, encouraged, lay interaction. This contact, however, was also one-way: lay people came to the monastery; the monks did not travel to the people. Fraternal charity was encouraged, but from an appropriate distance.

While communal monastic eremiticism became the norm, enactment of it was not always consistent. Reform movements of the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries proved especially volatile. The advent of the mendicant orders shortly after the Gregorian reform also witnessed a rise in a stricter sense of solitude and spirituality. Tied to both of these developments was also the renewed interest in the *vita apostolica* ('apostolic life'), and an increased importance placed on manual labour not simply as a guard against idleness, but also as penance. Jessalyn Bird notes that Jacques de Vitry 'universally lauds manual labor in his sermons to monks and laity [alike ... if undertaken as] making satisfaction for one's sin, it enables the laborer to earn eternal life as if he were a martyr or

a hermit'.⁶ Furthermore, the new hermits' particular labour was redefined as an emphasis on preaching combined with service to their neighbours in the community. Again, this is a combination of manual and spiritual labour, but it also implies a shift in movement – the hermits were beginning to move among the people rather than letting the people approach them.

Hermits, labour and work

Although early hermits saw spiritual work and earthly work as complementary, the overt elision of spiritual work and earthly work began in the reform movements of the late tenth and eleventh centuries, when preaching became part of the *via apostolica* for hermits. The desert fathers, although they were involved to some extent with community life through tangible assistance, nevertheless did not provide for the spiritual needs of the community members. This changed in the dawning of the Middle Ages. For instance, Charles Dereine connects the so-called 'clerical hermits' to the rise of itinerant preaching, as the people 'pressed into' the hermitage in crowds, forcing the hermits to leave and take up a life of the wandering preacher.⁷ In this case, although the people begin to come to the hermit, the hermits remove themselves from the people, and again, like the desert fathers, only attend to the community on their own terms. In *Wayward Monks and the Religious Revolution of the Eleventh Century*, Phyllis Jestice notes that escape from the distractions of secular life is much easier for a hermit to achieve than a recluse because a hermit can get up and go to a more remote area if he is troubled too much by visitors, returning again to tend to the community's needs when he is willing.⁸ However, she further points out that '[u]nlike monks [hermits] interacted frequently with lay and ecclesiastical society'.⁹ Hermits and other 'wayward monks' exemplified a growing sense of individualism that placed more emphasis on solitary religious endeavours than on success in a religious community, as well as a rising sense of social involvement and a greater degree of social engagement.

It is about this time that hermits began to be associated directly with roads and bridges. Although the order did not spread to England, in twelfth-century France the Frères Pontifes, or Brothers of the Bridge, were founded as an order dedicated to the building of bridges. Along with constructing bridges, the friars also assisted travellers with lodging and ferries, having secured the rights to the tolls from the lords in question.¹⁰ These actions also

gave the Bridge Friars certain rights over the roads connected to the bridges, and it seems as though they may have extended their engineering feats to at least maintaining the portions of roads connected directly to crossings. Of course the Bridge Friars were also responsible for praying with and for any travellers who happened to use their roads and ferries. In this manner, the brothers provided for the community on both material and spiritual levels, assisting people along the proper path, while also maintaining their spiritual and physical mobility. The Bridge Friars did not establish monastic houses; rather, the groups resided temporarily as needed along roads and structures. Although they were not precisely wandering preachers, they did create an alignment among mobility, travel and religious fulfilment.

Growing out of the 'wandering preacher' movement was the search for a new balance between the active and contemplative lives. Eric Saak notes that this concern with balance was of utmost importance to one eremitic order, the Augustinian Canons Regular. He believes that 'Augustinian monasticism had a major impact on the religious and intellectual life of Europe from the fourteenth century on into the early sixteenth, serving as a catalyst for both the Renaissance and the Reformation'.¹¹ In this reconceived Augustinian approach, the most perfect life is the eremitic life of contemplation and devotion along with an eagerness to share spiritual goals with others through both good works and preaching. This *vita perfectissima* ('most perfect life') was the combination of the eremitical and apostolic lives, and had been, according to the Augustinians, established by Jesus himself. The hermits that already lived a life uniting coenobitic and eremitic ideals made this union the new standard.¹²

Part of the difficulty in reconciling the active and contemplative lives is the very definition of the idea of work, in so far as it was contrasted with labour. As Michael Uebel and Kellie Robertson explain, '*work* in the Middle Ages was never precisely equivalent to medieval *labor*'.¹³ In the culture of the medieval period, labour held no intrinsic value. The function of labour was to meet the physical needs of one's family and community, and to avoid idleness, which would lead to sin.¹⁴ Work was a part of the economic structure of human society, which, like all other things, was ordered by God. Labour was, essentially, physical and unmemorable, a 'cheerless necessity', while work could be intangible yet is remembered and real, a significant creation. Uebel and Robertson further clarify that 'the result of its [labour's] effort is consumed

nearly as quickly as the effort is expended', while the results of work are more long-lasting.¹⁵ This is demonstrated in the definitions of the words themselves. In Middle English, *swink* and *travail* are used almost interchangeably for 'physical labor, hard work, and toil', while *werk* is reserved for 'a discrete act', and, moreover, 'a morally commendable act, (one's) act of piety; an exercise or demonstration of virtuous activity; also, a defined act of charity'.¹⁶ Clearly there is a distinction between the two forms of activity, although both can be interrelated, especially in the life of a hermit.

Instructional treatises such as the fifteenth-century *Myroure of Recluses* contain dire warnings against becoming a recluse simply to escape from the world and its responsibilities. The first 'cause or intention' (when choosing the reclusive life) includes those who 'lie around on their own without doing any labour'. This is the intention of the 'wrathful and slothful'.¹⁷ Although the author is never explicit about how wrathfulness and idleness are related, from the context of the treatise, it can be argued that the anger is directed at the outside world – one who is angry with the temptations of earthly life should not hide away as a hermit; rather, that individual should remain in the world. The true hermit will embrace both labour and work – physical exertion and contemplation. A balance between both types of toil was expected as well. There were just as many warnings against too much physical labour, especially teaching and farming, as there were against idleness. Once again, *The Myroure of Recluses* provides an overview: 'The labour of the body often prevents a person from spiritual works – albeit that bodily labour, undertaken for charity, for obedience, and for getting the necessities of life ... [is acceptable in moderation]; only when it exceeds its boundaries does it abate and prevent the profit of spiritual work.'¹⁸ Clearly, the medieval hermit had a fine line to negotiate. This passage from *The Myroure* nonetheless illustrates the perception about contemplation as work to be conducted in tandem with labour.

Late medieval eremitic literature acknowledged that prayerful meditation was work, but not necessarily labour, so the two needed to be combined in some fashion in order to satisfy the growing unrest with a clerical population that did not labour to serve the state, yet received benefits. Uebel and Robertson suggest that in post-Black Death England physical labour became valued as a 'phenomenon in its own right', subject to religious and social pressures, and bound up with both worldly and spiritual success. Further, they see a 'theology of work emerg[ing] where secular activities

dovetail with religious missions'.¹⁹ In other words, the growing unrest relates to the insular nature of clerical labour; while monasticism embraced a certain amount of physical toil from its origins, that labour was self-sustaining, not community-sustaining. Even the desert fathers who provided for others in times of need took from their own stock, not from a surplus created especially for the community.

The road hermits of the fourteenth and fifteenth (and even early sixteenth) centuries forged a new path: they remained solitary yet visible in such a manner that they were integral to the community, and in both labouring and working they came to the people instead of expecting the populace to come to them. Their very mobility redefined their religious purpose and goals, resulting in a true combination of community-supportive work and labour. In fact, they were often required to participate in public works as part of their vocation. Thus, one of the main vehicles for this new type of spiritual expression was the road, both metaphorical and physical.

Metaphorical roads, labour and work in late eremitic literature

The great hermit writers of the late Middle Ages, Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton and the *Cloud of Unknowing* author, to some degree all use the metaphor of the road.²⁰ For Rolle, the idea of the road is akin to life on earth. That is to say, that life on earth is transitory and a journey, with the ultimate goal being achievement of unification with God in heaven and the fervour of divine love. Humanity's true work is to love God. In the *Fire of Love*, Rolle outlines the path to this love, which brings *calor*, *dulcor* and *canor* (heat, sweetness and song). With hard work, an individual can experience divine pleasure before death. As Nicholas Watson explains,

In singing spiritual songs, the perfect are ... enjoying a part of their heavenly reward in advance:

... Qui hoc experitur eciam angelica cantica expertus est, cum sit eiusdem speciei in via et patria. (*Incendium Amoris* 237.10)

... He who has experienced this <harmony> has also experienced angelic song, since this is of the same sort both on the road and in the Fatherland.²¹

The road is not simply a path to righteousness or a way to be negotiated, but also an actual place of ecstasy, and a place where earthly work and heavenly work connect. Then, the elect must strive to maintain both their status and the balance between earthly

work and spiritual work in order to remain on the road to divine union: 'they [the elect] are urged along by the goad of a love which warily keeps them to the right path'.²² This path is a narrow and lonely one, but one which will lead to great reward.

Rolle also includes the metaphorical road in two separate passages of *Judica me*, written to a priest about finding and maintaining sanctity. In each instance, the reference alludes to the biblical passage (Matthew 7.13) about the narrow way to heaven being difficult to travel, with the wide and pleasant road to hell being easy to find. Here, though, the road is more successful for the hermit than for a regular priest. Watson explains that the priest is offered joy 'later' (*postea*) in heaven, but the hermit can attain it on earth; moreover, the priest's 'road' (*via*) is always difficult work, whereas the hermit's is only hard at the beginning.²³ Similarly, Rolle praises the hard work of contemplation. In *The Mendynge of Lyfe*, he writes: 'Contemplacioun is a travaile, but it is sweet, softe and desirable: this travaile maketh a man glad and not hevy ... O noble bisynesse!'²⁴ Hard work provides rewards, in this case, union with the divine. Rolle specifically ties together manual and spiritual labour through his word choices. Contemplation is likened both to 'bisynesse', which the *MED* defines as 'activity, work, [or] exercise', which implies a physical component, and to 'travail', which is defined as 'hard physical labor, toil'.²⁵ All of these are necessary to make the road to heaven and divine union achievable.

The author of the fourteenth-century *Cloud of Unknowing* and *The Book of Privy Counselling* takes a similar approach to Rolle's. Identifying love as the most significant cognitive (as opposed to affective) power possessed by humans, *The Cloud* claims that to love without knowing is the *bisynesse* of strenuous contemplative *werk*.²⁶ Both work and labour are spiritual and part of the whole 'road': 'So press on with your own work [contemplation ...] labour earnestly for a little while and you will find rest from the severity and the hardship of that work ... [I]t [the path of salvation] shall become very easy for you.'²⁷

The *Cloud* author continues to explain that spiritual labour is removed from the physical and has no real direction; however, since it is a road that one must travel, the reader must move ahead. Knowing God, as much as one can, requires labour and sacrifice. The *Book of Privy Counselling* is even more insistent on prayer as disciplined work, and the importance of this activity: '[remember] the worthines of this werk before alle other'.²⁸ However, manual labour is also important in keeping the hermit's mind and hands

busy, as long as all work is done with ‘naked intent’ to serve God, and ultimately to keep the hermit on the road to righteousness.

Literal roads, labour and work in connection with later hermits

Coupled with these connections between physical labour and spiritual work are references to literal roads. An unedited Middle English rule for hermits attributed (erroneously) to Pope Celestine, which I have dubbed the *Rule of Saint Celestine*, in an early sixteenth-century manuscript, London, British Library, MS Sloane 1584,²⁹ assumes that the hermit will be out of his cell on numerous occasions, and cites differing sets of regulations for fasting and praying while on the road, so to speak, instead of in his cell. The directions for the type, timing and duration of prayers are meticulous, but also included are directives to perform good works and charitable acts. For instance, hermits are instructed to ‘wyrke a tyme ... [H]e may best for to do summe dedys *with his handis* for ydylnes ys enemy of crystyne mene soule and ... ther fore he that swynkis not ys not worthy.’³⁰ The hermit is also supposed to take care not to damage the path he moves on. Although this is meant to be literal – the hermit is to take care of the road upon which he journeys – there is another level of meaning present. The treatise is deeply concerned with remaining on the ‘path’, or way, to holiness. For example, early on, the hermit is reminded that ‘more *parfytly commys* thos mene to the blesse of hevyne that folowys crist by þe nare way narew wey [sic] of wyllfull powrnes’.³¹ The idea of remaining true to the way God has outlined is maintained throughout the text. Yet this hermit is clearly expected to travel. Several passages outline differing prayers for the reader to recite, depending on whether or not he is ‘at home’.

The fifteenth-century text *To Hew Hermyte: A Pystyl of Solytary Lyfe Nowadayes* by the Carthusian Richard Methley is perhaps the clearest example of the multiple connections among work, contemplation, travel and roads/bridges. Early in his treatise, Methley addresses the contemporary concerns regarding the wilderness: ‘Thou hast mervel why I say “into the wyldernes”, whan thou dwellyst in a fayer chapel of our Lady [... because thou] aske no more felyshyp for to talke withal but her ... then I sey that thou dwellyst in the wyldernes.’³² Methley anticipates objections to the non-solitary experience he knows awaits the late medieval hermit. He suggests that instead of being concerned solely with physical solitude, the hermit should be most concerned with mental and

spiritual solitude. Solitude is a performative act, achieved by following the rule.³³ Methley goes on to suggest that the hermit keep mostly to his cell where he is expected to read, pray, contemplate and meditate, but also to complete 'good dedys with thy hand'.³⁴ Finally, he provides suggestions about how to deal with townspeople and nobility. He counsels the hermit to remain close to his cell, but also to provide shelter if necessary for travellers, to assist those in need and to pitch in as necessary. He warns the hermit not to displease his fellow community members, both because they provide for his sustenance and because it is displeasing to God. The combination of practical advice and spiritual guidance is a sign of the shifting emphasis on community engagement. Hermits' contributions to communities, especially as bridge wardens and highway repair workers, provided tangible evidence of their holiness and their usefulness.

Many hermits, although they still lived away from general society, set up residence on the outskirts of communities, near bridges, crossroads and other liminal spaces. Christopher Holdsworth also notes that in the case of hermits, especially, the 'holy man's power was rooted in a particular place where it evoked enormous loyalty'.³⁵ The road accents the transient nature of reality, so conventional images of stability (houses, bridges) are constructed nearby in order to provide grounding. The hermit's hut serves as a resting place for the ascetic where he can pray for the world, but also serves as a visible reminder to the community of how to put their faith in God, since the man of God's labour and work sustain their functional places. The hermit's hut becomes a ritual space for prayer, fasting and holy work – and that includes the manual labour involved in keeping bridges and roads in good repair. There is a locational spirituality, a sacred stability and a holy mobility. Visible public service such as road and bridge repair contributed to this reputation, while the liminal locations allowed the hermits to still reside in the wilderness. As Eddie Jones points out, 'the majority of later medieval hermits ... eschewed the wilderness altogether in favour of the performance of what would today be accounted public works'.³⁶ That is not to say that the two could not be combined.

From the late fourteenth century onwards, hermits were increasingly responsible for the upkeep of bridges and roads. In her seminal work *The Hermits and Anchorites of England*, Rotha Mary Clay explains that road hermits were a late medieval development, not seen before the fourteenth century.³⁷ Here the practical merges with the spiritual. The increased emphasis on labour as opposed

to work finds a literal outlet in road repair, aided by the economic realities of post-Black Death society: royal grant monies were no longer available, forcing communities to repair and maintain roads and bridges on their own in order to sustain economic viability. Hermits provided both a practical and a theological solution. There is a parallel here that can be drawn between the traditional *cura pastoralis* (pastoral care) and the hermits' care for the road. Emotional and spiritual support was an expected part of charitable Christian living, with greater obligations laid upon those who chose to live a vowed religious life. Priests, monks and even nuns were expected to care for their individual parish community as well as the greater human community, with emphasis on the infirm and troubled. Although hermits stood outside the official parish community structure, their upkeep of the road system, so central to the development of medieval economic life, aligns itself with the *cura pastoralis* mission – assuming responsibility for the support of their community, keeping them from harm and shoring up their troubles.

In many cases, it was useful that the hermit was not officially a member of the community: in Peter France's words, 'part of the authority of the hermit issues from his situation as a separate and uninvolved individual outside the boundaries of society. He is aware of, but not swayed by, the pressures that shape the lives of others.'³⁸ That is, the hermit is a part of the community, but only partially. For instance, Jones records that after 1462, a hermit by Newbridge in Standlake, in Oxfordshire, repaired the bridge and kept it in good working order, thus earning 'goodwill and favour' from the community members and neighbouring villages.³⁹ Yet he was still technically outside all of these communities, meaning he was able to assist each ably without detriment to the others. These characteristics make the hermit an ideal choice for keeping roads and bridges secure. Medieval road systems were not state-supported undertakings. It was up to each individual community to maintain these passageways. Clay notes that the bridge keeper's chief duty lay in raising funds for materials and any necessary wages.⁴⁰ Bridge hermits were skilled at obtaining donations and pledges. Numerous wills mention bequests to hermits for their maintenance, which included the upkeep of the bridge or road they cared for. Moreover, by performing many of the necessary repairs themselves, these hermits saved the money usually spent on wages, allowing for longer periods of maintained roads and bridges. As Clay remarks, '[Recluses] had fulfilled their purpose and justified

their existence ... [T]hey were often men and women of strong and saintly character whose life commanded respect and won gratitude from their fellow-men, who recognized them as *workers*.⁴¹ This redefinition of hermits as workers, through the reappraisal of their contemplation as a strenuous activity and as a necessary function of the public system, is what truly integrated the contemplative recluse into medieval society.

In an extensive study on paving grants in the late Middle Ages, Edward Harvey notes that near the end of Henry III's reign, the Crown began to provide communities with funds for public works such as roads. The funds were acquired through paving tolls and royal grant monies and street paving was seen as 'an investment made by both the town and the King' necessary for the economic success of the community.⁴² Towns were required to have both paviors and cleaners on staff, but even with such mandates, the upkeep was expensive and time-consuming. Moreover, in post-Black Death society, royal funds began to dry up, leaving individual communities responsible, by law, for the upkeep of roads, bridges and causeways in order to maintain economic success (trade routes), spiritual accomplishment (pilgrimage routes) and martial fidelity (routes for troops).⁴³ This became complicated and expensive, since the volume of traffic increased exponentially, yet the roads that supported it were ancient even by medieval standards. More than just the roads, however, 'it was ... by the building of new bridges that Englishmen of the Middle Ages set about the improvement of their communications [and] Old English law had made repairing bridges a fundamental charge upon land, and the obligation passed into the general body'.⁴⁴ Again, the hermit fills an important niche, in that road repair and bridge repair become crucial parts of the developing economy and urbanization, but with waning labour forces, towns could often not spare citizens to perform such a time-consuming job.

The importance of these bridge and road hermits can be seen in one small snapshot of medieval life. Jones lists twenty-seven sites of eremitic activity in medieval Oxford. Of these, at least eight are connected with either bridges or roads in some way.⁴⁵ Most of this knowledge comes to us in the form of wills and bequests. Many donors simply donate a certain amount of money to the hermit for 'bridge repair', or 'ditch maintenance', with a few being more generally directed towards 'maintenance of the highway' or 'mending roads and causeways'. Some hermits are known by name, such as John Jaye (1399) and his

replacement, Thomas Kendall (1406), responsible for the collection of tolls, maintenance of roads and repair of bridges between Cambridge and Barton.⁴⁶ Others remain nameless, but were responsible for the same tasks in Attlebridge, Farnham, Stony Stratford, Wandsworth and numerous other locales.⁴⁷ Clay notes that 'appointments to such posts [established hermitages] were often made by the commonality of the town'.⁴⁸ Several specific cases highlight the direct connection between spiritual vocation and road maintenance alongside community visibility. A licence granted on 12 December 1447 directs the bearer (John Stafford, Archbishop of Canterbury, among others) to 'ordain [select] a hermit to stay in the hermitage [at Tetsworth] and labour with his hands for the maintenance of a highway between Stokenchurch and Hereford Brugge, which has long been a nuisance for lack thereof'.⁴⁹ The dwelling is directly located at a crossroads, built for the purposes of housing a hermit who is not only a holy man ordained by the archbishop, but also expected to maintain the road as part of his vocational calling. Manual labour is made necessary for his spiritual existence. Another instance of this direct linkage between spiritual and material culture dates to the early fifteenth century. On 29 October 1423, the mayor and town aldermen of Maidenhead received a formal profession from Richard Ludlow, the new hermit. He promised to be chaste, to avoid taverns, to pray, to fast and to attend mass. Most significantly, however, he agreed that whatever alms he received would go directly to repairing the bridge and 'ye common weyes [roads] longing to ye ... town'.⁵⁰ Here the hermit's existence depends on his promise to keep up the roads and bridge; without this public service, he would not have been allowed to occupy the hermitage. Public works become part of his formal profession, ranking alongside chastity and continence.

Clay commends these road hermits, stating that 'the labours of the roadmender were most necessary [in the forest and fens]'.⁵¹ The hermits she notes repaired roads all over the fens, causeways and moors, allowing secular people access to trade and pilgrimage routes. Pilgrimage was important both spiritually and economically to communities. Hermits were duly recognized as important to this endeavour. For instance, a letter set forth by the Bishop of Ely in 1458 specifically commends a hermit:

Since our church of Ely is surrounded by waters and marshes, and the relics of the Holy Virgins lying in it can only be visited over bridges and causeys [causeways], requiring daily repair, we

commend to your charity William Grene, hermit, who, at our command and with consent of our church of Ely, has undertaken the repair of the causeys and bridges in Stuntneye and Some.⁵²

This hermit not only assisted pilgrims in reaching a spiritual site, but also aided his community in obtaining 'tourist' money. The spiritual economy of pilgrimage and relic trade is here elided with the literal economy of the town, which would be aided by the influx of visitors to the shrine. Moreover, they prepared the pilgrims for their spiritual encounter by providing both shelter and prayer. According to Sidney Heath, 'Certain of these hermits appear also to have dwelt near the high-roads, and especially by fords over rivers, and in the vicinity of wells of water, where, in addition to their prayers and blessing, they bestowed a frugal sort of hospitality [to travellers]' as well as maintaining the actual road itself.⁵³ These actions recall the earlier French order of Bridge Friars, although the English hermits were not confederated into any sort of association. Still, the hermits provide succour and shelter as well as safe passage. And, as Stenton notes, among the travellers who used the roads in medieval England the pilgrim was a common figure, and one who left behind an economic imprint.⁵⁴

Hermit assistance, however, was not confined solely to the countryside and smaller towns of England. Salisbury, Bury St Edmunds, Pontefract, Bristol, Oxford, Cambridge, Norwich and other major trade centres all housed hermits, who, as Clay notes, 'often undertook definite employment' involving the roads and bridges, and often occupied cells situated near town gates.⁵⁵ London, too, relied upon this holy assistance for upkeep. Describing entry into medieval London, Walter Besant writes, '[w]e arrive at the first of the City Gates – Aldgate ... beside the gate [and bridge] is a hermitage. Such hermitages near gates and bridges are not uncommon. The hermit lives on the alms of passers-by.'⁵⁶ In exchange, the hermit both prays for the travellers and keeps up the bridge and the road immediately connected to it. Thus the hermit is able to labour for the good of the community and to work for his salvation while also being self-sufficient. This is a quality that all recluses, both hermits and anchorites, are expected to have. Anchorites were carefully investigated by the bishop in order to determine their funds before being enclosed. Hermits, however, with their freedom of movement, also had the 'freedom' of self-sufficiency. Road upkeep presents an obvious and helpful solution to the issue of support.

Jennifer Summit has suggested that as society moved into the age of the Reformation, personal religious experience became valued over the idea of revelation.⁵⁷ In other words, prayers handed down by divine figures – products of revelation, which often conferred special status on the bearer – waned in comparison to actual lived holiness, or experience, including charitable works and public involvement. Although the eremitic disciplines began as a way to escape the world and be more open to ‘products of revelation’ while still assisting with the community of believers, they became more concerned with the work of contemplation rather than the work of charity. This, as I have shown, changed in the late Middle Ages, when the vocation was once again reconceived, with ‘revelation’, mysticism and contemplation retaining value, but being surpassed by physical labour and visible communal and charitable work. Holdsworth concurs, connecting the immediacy of God’s presence with labour: ‘Just as the hermit was one unsatisfied with second-hand experience of the powers of God, or of the devil, so was he one who lived, partly at least, from the fruit of his own labors and not from the work of others.’⁵⁸ The self-sufficiency that road repair and bridge upkeep provided for the hermit assured them a material place in society after their spiritual place became suspect. In the post-Reformation years, work became a mandate. Martin Luther in particular was sceptical of contemplation as ‘work’. While the Reformation did not take place in England until the 1530s, new ideas about labour were already filtering into society. This shift makes the eremitic ‘double life’ of work and labour all the more visible and integral to late medieval urban environments, with the road as the primary symbol of this fusion.

Space syntax, medieval roads and medieval hermits

Space syntax is best described in Sonit Bafna’s terms as an investigation of ‘the relationship between human societies and space from the perspective of a general theory of the structure of inhabited space in all its diverse forms: buildings, settlements, cities, or even landscapes’.⁵⁹ The demarcation of boundaries allows particular relationships of access or visibility to emerge among the component spaces, and this in turn generates patterns of movement and encounter within the population. Thus, we can examine the way constituent parts are interrelated, and then how these parts work together in a functional arrangement, creating a network. Hermits are mobile and assist in mobility. Yet they are also stable figures

entrusted with important public works, primarily road maintenance and bridge repair, both actions that are conducive to movement and community stability. Henri Lefebvre suggests that representations of space are themselves a symbolic performance of sorts. It is a 'logical necessity' that the 'lived, conceived, and perceived realms [of space] should be interconnected, so that the "subject" ... may move from one to another without confusion'.⁶⁰ Thus the material structure of the hermitage must work in tandem with the disciplines and practices of the life in order to produce the right mixture of contemplation and manual labour for success. Hermits lived a type of 'mixed life' in that they combined solitude and labour with social interaction and social responsibility. The road system, as their public network, became the visible means of tracing their vocation. Geography, topography and theology work together to create a new pattern of spiritual expression.

Giving selected members control of movement creates levels of responsibility, division of labour and hierarchies. As Marlous Craane observes, 'Medieval towns are not just about the buildings within them but also about the open spaces that define them', as well as the roads that connect and transverse them. Medieval life was about 'how people used and experienced them [roads and structures] in the space around them, and the topology which defined the medieval urban environment'.⁶¹ If space syntax is all about topology and the analysis of natural movement, that is the proportion of movement determined by the space itself, then a syntactical analysis confirms the importance of the hermit within the medieval road system on both the spiritual and physical levels. On one hand, the spiritual road was difficult to traverse yet the hermit chose a vocation of motility. On the other hand, the hermit served to facilitate spiritual travel for others on pilgrimage while also assisting the commercialization and economic development of the local community. Within a vocation that came to be defined by its motility and public interaction rather than its stability or enclosure, the road assumes a central place as a symbol of the path to divine union, reinforced by eremitic literature, and as a literal function of the hermit's public commitment.

Conclusion

I have argued that the road – both as a physical thing requiring labour and repair, and as a theological construct fulfilling a spiritual ideal – becomes central to the eremitic vocation from the twelfth

century onwards, culminating in a growing number of so-called 'road hermits' throughout the fourteenth century and into the fifteenth. Solitary, yet highly visible through their work of repairing bridges and roads, road hermits occupied a unique position in late medieval culture. They offered their communities an innovative form of the 'mixed life', a combination of spiritual labour, in the form of praying and preaching, and manual work, in the form of bridge- and road-mending. Roads give nuance to the value of mobility; they are associated with motion and progress. Yet, in the case of the hermit, the road provided stability at the same time it signified movement, thereby creating a truly liminal space. It is within this newly delineated space that the performance of this new form of spiritual expression demonstrates the changing status of the hermit's vocation in late medieval England.

Notes

- 1 Athanasius, *Life of Antony*, trans. H. Ellershaw; notes by A. Robertson, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 2nd series, vol. 4 (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1892), p. 196.
- 2 Benedicta Ward, 'Introduction', in *The Lives of the Desert Fathers: The 'Historia Monachorum in Aegypto'*, trans. Norman Russell, Cistercian Studies 34 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981), pp. 3–46 (p. 12).
- 3 Ward, 'Introduction', *The Lives of the Desert Fathers*. See, for example, p. 14.
- 4 C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages* (London: Longman, 1984), p. 19. For an edition of St Benedict's Rule, see St Benedict, *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, ed. and trans. Timothy Fry, preface by Thomas Moore (New York: Vintage, 1998 [1981]).
- 5 St Benedict, *Rule*, 'Brothers sent on a journey', p. 66.
- 6 Jessalyn Bird, 'The religious's role in a post-Fourth-Lateran world: Jacques de Vitry's *Sermones ad status* and *Historia occidentalis*', in Carolyn Muessig (ed.), *Medieval Monastic Preaching* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p. 226.
- 7 Charles Dereine, 'Les origines de Prémontré', *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 42 (1947), 352–78 (p. 362). Translations mine.
- 8 Phyllis Jestice, *Wayward Monks and the Religious Revolution of the Eleventh Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).
- 9 Jestice, *Wayward Monks*, p. 93.
- 10 For an overview of this order, see Marjorie Nice Boyer, 'The bridge-building brotherhoods', *Speculum*, 39:4 (1964), 635–50.

- 11 Eric L. Saak, 'Ex vita patrum formatur vita fratrum: the appropriation of the Desert Fathers in the Augustinian monasticism of the later Middle Ages', *Church History and Religious Culture*, 86 (2006), 191–228 (p. 191).
- 12 See Saak, 'Ex vita patrum formatur vita fratrum', pp. 221–2.
- 13 Michael Uebel and Kellie Robertson, 'Conceptualizing labor in the Middle Ages', in Kellie Robertson and Michael Uebel (eds), *The Middle Ages at Work* (New York: Palgrave, 2004), pp. 1–15 (p. 4). The authors further note that 'every European language, ancient and modern, preserves a distinction between two words [*work* and *labour*] we have come to regard as referring to the same practice' (p. 4).
- 14 See Adriano Tilgher, *Homo faber: Work through the Ages*, trans. D. C. Fisher (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1930).
- 15 Uebel and Robertson, 'Conceptualizing labor', p. 5.
- 16 See *MED swink* (n.) 1a: 'physical labor, hard work, toil'; *MED travail* (n.) 1a: 'hard physical labor, toil'; *MED werk* (n.1) 1a: 'a discrete act performed or undertaken by someone'; 1c: 'a morally commendable act'.
- 17 London, British Library, MS Harley 2372, fol. 1v, ll. 25–6. Translation mine.
- 18 London, British Library, MS Harley 2372, fols 16v–17r, ll. 520–6. Translation mine.
- 19 Uebel and Robertson, 'Conceptualizing labor', pp. 7–11 (p. 11).
- 20 The great thirteenth-century mystic writer St Bonaventure also wrote *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum*, translated variously as *The Journey of the Mind to God*, *The Mind's Road to God* and *The Mind's Journey to God*; for a list of texts and translations, see St Bonaventure, *The Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, ed. Stephen F. Brown (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), p. xix.
- 21 Nicholas Watson, *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 71.
- 22 Watson, *Richard Rolle*, p. 138.
- 23 See Watson, 'Active life: *Judica me* as apologetic pastoral', in *Richard Rolle*, pp. 75–95, esp. pp. 92–3.
- 24 Richard Rolle, *The Mendynge of Lyfe*, in Barry Windeatt (ed.), *English Mystics of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 18–23.
- 25 See *MED bisnesse* (n.) 1a: 'the state or fact of being engaged in an activity; activity, work, exercise'; *MED travail* (n.) 1a: 'hard physical labor, toil' (see note 16 above).
- 26 See *The Cloud of Unknowing* and *the Book of Privy Counseling*, ed. William Johnston, foreword by Huston Smith (New York: Image Books, 1973), esp. 'A good exposition of certain doubts that may arise concerning contemplation' (pp. 48–51).
- 27 *The Cloud of Unknowing*, trans. James Walsh (New York: Paulist, 1981), p. 174.

- 28 *The Book of Privy Counselling*, in Barry Windeatt (ed.), *English Mystics*, pp. 78–105 (p. 95).
- 29 *The Rule of Saint Celestine*, in London, British Library, MS Sloane 1584, fols 92r–96v. Its contents also include a portion of the Premonstratensian Rule, as well as other works.
- 30 Transcription from London, British Library, MS Sloane 1584, fol. 93v, ll. 7–9, 11: ‘work for a time ... He may best do some deeds with his hands for idleness is the enemy of Christian men’s souls ... [H]e who does not work is not worthy.’ Translation mine.
- 31 Transcription from London, British Library, MS Sloane 1584, fol. 89v, ll. 20–1; fol. 90r, ll. 1–2. Repetition is in original.
- 32 Richard Methley, *To Hew Hermyte: A Pystyl of Solytary Lyfe Nowadayes*, in Windeatt (ed.), *English Mystics*, pp. 265–71 (pp. 266–7).
- 33 For more on solitude as a performative function rather than a physical state, see Michelle M. Sauer, ‘Privacy, exile, and the rhetoric of solitude in the Middle English anchoritic tradition’, in Liz Herbert McAvoy (ed.), *The Rhetorics of Anchoritism* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), pp. 96–110.
- 34 Methley, *To Hew Hermyte*, p. 270.
- 35 Christopher Holdsworth, ‘Hermits and the powers of the frontier’, *Reading Medieval Studies*, 16 (1990), 55–76 (56).
- 36 Eddie A. Jones, ‘The hermits and anchorites of Oxfordshire’, *Oxoniensia*, 63 (1998), 51–77 (53).
- 37 Rotha Mary Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites of England* (London: Methuen, 1914), esp. pp. 57–65.
- 38 Peter France, *Hermits: The Insights of Solitude* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1998), p. 29.
- 39 Jones, ‘The hermits and anchorites of Oxfordshire’, 70.
- 40 Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 57.
- 41 Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 190–1 (emphasis mine).
- 42 Edward Harvey, ‘Pavage grants and urban street paving in medieval England, 1249–1462’, *The Journal of Transport History*, 31:2 (2010), 151–63 (151–2).
- 43 See Richard H. Britnell, *The Commercialisation of English Society, 1000–1500* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1996).
- 44 F. M. Stenton, ‘The road system of medieval England’, *The Economic History Review*, 7:1 (1936), 1–21 (6).
- 45 For a list of sites, see Jones, ‘The hermits and anchorites of Oxfordshire’, 63–76.
- 46 David Harrison, *The Bridges of Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 201.
- 47 Harrison, *The Bridges of Medieval England*, pp. 200–4; Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites*, pp. 57–65.
- 48 Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 63.
- 49 Jones, ‘The hermits and anchorites of Oxfordshire’, 75.

- 50 Harrison, *Bridges*, p. 202.
- 51 Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 60.
- 52 Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 60.
- 53 Sidney Heath, *Pilgrim Life in the Middle Ages* (Port Washington, NY; London: Kennikat Press, 1911), pp. 82–3.
- 54 Stenton, 'Road system of medieval England', 15–16.
- 55 Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites*, p. 71.
- 56 Walter Besant, *Medieval London*, vol. 1 (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1906), p. 162. Clay further notes that hermits were also found at Cripplegate and Bishopsgate.
- 57 Jennifer Summit, *Lost Property: The Women Writer and English Literary History, 1380–1589* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 124–6.
- 58 Holdsworth, 'Hermits and the powers of the frontier', 63.
- 59 Sonit Bafna, 'Space syntax; a brief introduction to its logic and analytical techniques', *Environment and Behavior*, 35:1 (2003), 17–29 (17).
- 60 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 40.
- 61 Marlous Craane, 'The medieval urban "movement economy": using space syntax in the study of medieval towns as exemplified by the town of 's-Hertogenbosch, the Netherlands', in Daniel Koch, Lars Marcus and Jesper Steen (eds), *Proceedings of the 7th International Space Syntax Symposium* (Stockholm: KTH, 2009), pp. 1–14 (p. 2).

The royal itinerary and roads in England under Edward I

Michael Prestwich

Edward I knew the vital importance of roads. In the course of his conquest of Wales, he sent axemen to cut routes through the forests of the north to enable his armies to march against Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. In one of the measures taken in the Statute of Winchester of 1285, the king's major piece of legislation for the keeping of the peace, he ordered the clearing of land beside the highways, to an impressive width of two hundred feet on each side. With shrubs and undergrowth removed, travellers would be safer from highway robbery.¹ Edward himself spent a great deal of his time travelling; few people can have known so much about the routes that could be taken through Britain.

The importance of royal itineraries as a tool for working out the road systems of medieval England has long been recognized. Sir Frank Stenton pointed out in 1936 that thirteenth-century royal journeys provide the earliest evidence of the course of English roads used for long-distance travel. It was not his task to explain the itineraries; he merely noted that Edward I was constantly on the move, and that 'most of his journeys were undertaken for business rather than pleasure'. He also concluded that 'cross-country travel in every direction was frequently undertaken'.² B. P. Hindle examined the itineraries of John, Edward I and Edward II, mapping them to provide valuable comparisons, and to demonstrate which routes were most frequently used.³ The itineraries are also important for what they reveal about the material circumstances of royal travel, and the character of kingship. In his recent biography of Edward I, Marc Morris has set out some of the king's movements, noting for example his rapid journey from Bristol to Dover early in 1285, which was followed by a two-month stay in East Anglia to visit the shrines there.⁴ The main purpose of this chapter is to provide further examination of Edward's constant travels in England.

Edward journeyed almost incessantly; in 1285, for example, he stayed at about a hundred different places in the course of his travels. Even late in the reign he kept this up, stopping at over a hundred towns and villages during 1305. When he was in England, it was usually only sessions of parliament that kept him in one place (most often Westminster) for any length of time. It was, of course, normal for rulers to travel, and tradition was important; it would have been astonishing if the king had acted differently from his predecessors. The travel habits of Henry II are well known from a letter written by Peter of Blois. The court was constantly on the move, and Peter complained bitterly about the king's unpredictability; he might suddenly order everyone to be off at dawn, or might delay a planned departure until noon. Henry was capable of ordering a halt in some totally unsuitable place, with no proper accommodation available. The first king from whose reign sufficient documents survive to enable his itinerary to be worked out in detail is John, who travelled constantly, though not to Cornwall, and rarely to East Anglia or the north.⁵

In Edward I's case, there is an obvious explanation for some of his travels. He led three campaigns in Wales, in 1277, 1282–3 and 1294–5, with Chester as the main base from which his forces set out, and where supplies were collected. War with France meant an expedition to Flanders in 1297, and the final years of the reign saw frequent campaigns in Scotland, with the king going north in 1296, 1298, 1300, 1301, 1303 and 1306, normally advancing from Berwick in the east, but on two occasions using Carlisle. The various campaigns explain why it was that the king went to York on just two occasions, in 1280 and 1284, before his involvement in Scottish affairs, and why he never went to Chester after 1294. The needs of these many campaigns, however, do not explain the pattern of constant travelling within England, the main topic of this chapter.

It might be thought that the royal itinerary was an essential instrument of government, enabling the king to keep in contact with all parts of his realm, and providing a means to display his authority to his people. This has been described for the twelfth century, when 'the coming of the king's court to a locality brought the local aristocracy and clergy into contact with their royal lord, impressed a glamorous and majestic image on the local population, enabled grievances and requests to be made more immediately'.⁶ Yet by Edward I's reign it is much less clear that the royal itinerary was necessary for such purposes. The fact that the king

spent so much of his time travelling is more likely to have hindered rather than advanced the administration of the kingdom, in much the same way as royal progresses under Queen Elizabeth I frustrated some of her officials.⁷ The king did not need to travel in order to rule the country; the complex web of central and local government did not require regular visitations from Edward in person, and there were no arrangements made for him to check up on sheriffs and other officials as he journeyed through the country. It made sense that government should operate from Westminster (or during the Scottish wars from York). The exchequer was based at Westminster, as were the central courts of law. The chancery was becoming established there in this period. An order in 1296 requesting the chancellor, John Langton, to come to the king at Berwick 'with all our chancery' shows that by that date it was not usual for the chancery to accompany the king on his travels.⁸ An itinerant court caused problems for an increasingly static administration.

Merely finding the king could cause problems, as the chancellor, Robert Burnell, appreciated. In January 1280, when the king went to hunt in the New Forest, Burnell went with his staff to London, 'as if to a fixed place where all seeking writs and prosecuting their rights could find the appropriate remedy'.⁹ It was not easy for his subjects to approach the king on his journeys. Early in 1300 Margery de la Chaumbre from Durham followed the king all the way from Berwick to Wetherby in order to try to bring an appeal against those guilty of killing her husband.¹⁰ It was far easier to present a petition at parliament than to travel in Edward's wake.

Royal entries to towns might be an important element in royal travels, for they could offer opportunities for formal ceremonies and entertainments. This was very much the case in a later period, the sixteenth century, when they were a way of reinforcing loyalty to the monarchy.¹¹ This provides a parallel to the beginning of Edward I's reign. When the king entered London in 1274, after his return from crusade, he was treated to a splendid reception by the city, which the chronicler Thomas Wykes felt that his words could not adequately describe. In the following year he was greeted with much joy and ceremony by the townspeople of Oxford, with the womenfolk all in their finest robes. The king, however, disappointed them, for he feared the curse that St Frideswide had laid on any king who should enter the place, and would not go through the west gate into the town.¹² The excitement of having a new king on the throne did not last. There is no evidence later in the reign of splendid civic entries when Edward came to major

towns. His journeys were not grand progresses, marked by grand ceremonies intended to display the king to his people, as would be the case with royal travels in the sixteenth century. Curiously, it is only from Scotland that there is evidence, late in the reign, of ceremonial greetings as the king journeyed. A band of harpists, fiddlers and minstrels played for Edward when he left Perth in 1304, and a choir of seven women sang for him near Gask, as had been customarily done for Scottish kings.¹³ Edward was no doubt anxious to try to establish a link with royal tradition in Scotland.

It is unlikely that Edward's subjects were eager to welcome him on his travels; a visit from the king and his household was to be feared for all the disruption it would cause. Local markets were dislocated by the need for provisions. Opportunities for profit were few, as the Crown's practice was to buy up supplies on credit using the right of compulsory purchase, or prise. Payment, if it was ever made, was long delayed. A comment made about Edward II can almost certainly apply to his father: 'Formerly, indeed, the inhabitants rejoiced to see the face of the king when he came, but now, because the people are injured by the king's arrival, they look forward greatly to his departure and as he leaves they pray that he may never return.'¹⁴ A letter written at London late in Edward I's reign is clear that a royal arrival was unwelcome. It announced that the king would be at Nottingham at Easter, and that food supplies should be collected. The author explained that the intention was to go on as fast as possible to Scotland, and he asked for six or seven tuns of wine to put in a secret place, so that he could find them when he arrived. He asked the recipient of the letter to comfort the people and tell them that the king would go as fast as he came.¹⁵

In the case of kings in the Anglo-Saxon period, one explanation for their travels is that they needed to move around their lands, going from one royal estate to another, eating up the local produce as they went. Even as late as the early thirteenth century, King John normally stayed in royal houses or castles, though by that date the king's household carried supplies with it rather than relying on what was available locally.¹⁶ By Edward's reign, the pattern had changed further. There is little indication that royal itineraries were designed so that the king could move from one royal property to another; most of the time he stayed in other people's houses rather than his own. Royal castles and houses may appear to have offered obvious stopping points, but in practice, with a few notable exceptions, these were relatively little used. When the king was in York, he stayed in the archbishop's palace, not the castle.¹⁷

Many castles were in a desperately poor state of repair, with collapsing masonry and leaking roofs; only those in which Henry III had taken an active interest were in fit condition. Edward went to the great fortress of Dover just eleven times, while Nottingham, another major castle, was visited by the king on only six occasions during the reign. When at Lincoln early in 1284, Edward appears to have stayed not in the castle, but in Nettleham just outside the city, if the enrolments on the chancery writs are to be believed. The king saw the great Norman keep of Norwich on no more than two occasions. Cambridge Castle, where there was very considerable expenditure between 1284 and 1298, was visited just once by Edward.¹⁸ Orford in Suffolk, built by Henry II, was another important castle that the king saw on no more than one occasion. In contrast, Edward stayed at Windsor some thirty times, residing either in the castle, or probably more often in the manor that served as a hunting lodge in the park. He visited Canterbury eighteen times, not surprisingly given its importance as a pilgrimage centre. Newcastle upon Tyne was a very obvious stopping point on the main route to Scotland, and the king was there on fifteen occasions.

Personal reasons provide better explanations for the king's itineraries than the needs of government or the presence of royal castles and houses. Religion was highly significant in the king's travels. Edward was a conventionally religious man, and it was not sufficient for him that he should simply make offerings to churches in places that he passed through. He clearly considered it important that he should visit major shrines and places of pilgrimage. He went to St Albans nineteen times in the course of his reign, Durham eighteen, Bury St Edmunds fourteen times, Walsingham and Beverley twelve times each and Ely eight. The need to obtain divine approval for his military enterprises was significant. He visited Bury St Edmunds in 1285 so as to fulfil a vow he had made in the course of his recent campaign in Wales.¹⁹ A pilgrimage to Worcester at the start of September 1294 took Edward away from Portsmouth where his troops were assembling to sail to Gascony; as well as making practical preparations, the king thought it advisable to obtain the approval of St Wulfstan for the expedition.²⁰

In 1299 Edward prayed publicly for the support of St Alban in his Scottish enterprise.²¹ In May 1300 the king went north to fight the Scots. Rather than take a direct route, he went through St Albans, and took a major diversion to Ely, where there were important relics, including the head of St Botolph, and St Edmund's

sword and shirt. Alms given there by the king and his son totalled almost £5. Good news from Scotland resulted in a 7*s.* donation. He then went to Bury St Edmunds; as he left the monastic precinct, he turned and 'bowed very devoutly to the blessed martyr and his saints, with his head bent low'.²² He then went on to further devotions at Walsingham, before going north through Lincoln to Hull. As he moved on towards Scotland, he made important visits to Beverley and Durham, for the banners of St John of Beverley and of St Cuthbert were taken from the respective shrines and carried north with Edward's armies, to give them spiritual strength against the Scots. At Beverley he gave seven shillings to the place where St John was buried, and the same to his banner, as well as alms in the queen's name. Similar donations were made at Durham.²³ It is not surprising, given the number of shrines that the king visited on his way north on this occasion, that the Bury St Edmunds chronicler suggested that Edward 'did not fix his hope of future victory on coats of mail nor troops of horse, but laid the main foundation of his campaign on the supreme Author of Salvation'.²⁴

Sport provided another reason for travel. Hunting was a central activity in aristocratic and court life. The many parks and chases of the English countryside show how important it was to the nobility, while the great royal forests, such as the New Forest, demonstrated the scale of royal power.²⁵ Edward I was particularly keen on falconry, on which he spent lavishly, particularly during the middle years of the reign.²⁶ He also hunted stags; according to the chronicler Nicholas Trivet they were his favourite pursuit. Documentary evidence shows that shooting was one method of hunting he used; in 1286 four bows were bought for him, along with half a dozen arrows. These cost 6*d.* each, whereas the normal price was just over a penny.²⁷ The need to find the best hunting helps to explain the king's itinerary, particularly in his earlier years on the throne. For example, from 19 August to 3 September 1276 Edward was in the New Forest, clearly for sport. Brill in Oxfordshire was the centre of Bernwood Forest, and was visited by Edward four times in the 1270s. He went frequently to King's Langley, one of Queen Eleanor's manors; no doubt the deer park there was one of the attractions.²⁸ There was a royal hunting lodge at Geddington in Northamptonshire, to which Edward went on five occasions; Clarendon and Woodstock were important hunting centres, as of course was Windsor with its great park. Guildford, with a park of some 1600 acres, had been one of Henry III's favourite palaces. It was part of the dower lands of the queen mother, and Edward I did

not spend on it in the way his father had done, but nevertheless visited it eleven times, though not until 1302 did he spend as long as five nights there.²⁹

The reasons for a particular itinerary might be many. Edward's movements in a time of crisis provide a good case study, showing how the needs of war, the requirements of piety, family matters, the desire for hunting and the problems of politics all combined to determine where the king chose to go. In November 1296 Edward went to Bury St Edmunds, staying there for three weeks. Parliament was held there, and it has been plausibly suggested that this may have been to celebrate both the feast day of the ninth-century saint Edmund the Martyr on 20 November and to commemorate his brother, Edmund of Lancaster, who had died in Gascony earlier in the year.³⁰ He then remained in Suffolk, spending seventeen nights in Ipswich, where his daughter Elizabeth married the count of Holland on 7 January. Next, he spent ten days near Harwich, in William Frank's manor; the reason for this stay is not known. On 26 January 1297 writs were issued to summon parliament to meet at Salisbury on 24 February. Edward did not hasten to go there. He spent some time at Castle Acre and made a pilgrimage to the shrine at Walsingham. It was not until mid-February that he began the journey westwards, and speed was necessary. Two nights were spent on the way from Ely to King's Langley; the average day's journey was thirty-six miles. Three nights were then spent in the neighbourhood of King's Langley and St Albans, and then the king travelled on rapidly, averaging twenty-four miles a day, to Windsor, Odiham and Longstock, to reach Salisbury on the appointed day. After the parliament he moved south to Breaumore in Hampshire, and on to Ringwood on the edge of the New Forest, where he presumably enjoyed the hunting. He then went west, to Dorset and Devon, spending some three weeks in Plympton, one of his longest stays in a single place outside Westminster and Windsor. This was so that he could see to the affairs of Gascony; he wrote to the officials of the exchequer in April, telling them that 'we do not intend to leave the Plymouth area until the Gascon business is properly arranged, and the fleet on its way'.³¹ It was at Plympton that Edward heard a number of petitions from his Gascon subjects, while the fleet of thirty-eight ships carrying victuals, treasure and horses duly sailed from Plymouth.³² Edward then made his way back along the south coast, spending a week in early June in Canterbury, seat of one his political opponents, Archbishop Winchelsey. It was not until 18 June that Edward was in the political heart of the kingdom,

Westminster. He remained there until the start of August, when he moved towards Winchelsea, first spending a week nearby at Udimore. These travels show that Edward had no real permanent base; his movements were determined by a complex mix of military need, religious obligation, political requirement and a desire to hunt.

Royal travel was a major enterprise. The size of the king's household is not easy to estimate, but it was very large. The purely domestic household was set out in an ordinance of 1279.³³ It named various office holders, from the stewards and marshals to the clerks of the chapel, the pantrymen and the porter. In all, about fifty officials were specified. This, however, did not include any of the subordinate staff, the servants, valets and boys. Nor did it include all the sections of the household, notably omitting the king's hunting establishment. No mention was made of the royal household knights and squires. The household ordinance of 1318, drawn up as a measure of reform, is far more comprehensive than that of 1279, and lists about 330 staff. Again, however, although it includes a bodyguard of thirty sergeants-at-arms, it excludes the household knights and squires.³⁴ It seems likely that in reality Edward I's household might number up to 500 individuals.³⁵

As well as the king's household, the queen's was normally also part of the same entourage. Edward's first queen, Eleanor of Castile, was unusual in that she accompanied the king whenever possible, even going with him to Caernarfon in 1284 when she was about to give birth. Her household, however, was not integrated into that of her husband. In 1289–90 she had a staff and retinue of about 150.³⁶ Edward's second queen, Margaret of France, employed about forty men in her household simply to provide for her transport needs: palfreymen, sumptermen, carters and advance riders.³⁷

The staff of the royal household, with the carts and packhorses, must have clogged the roads and tracks they used. Yet this was not all. The evidence suggests that considerable numbers of common people would follow the king on his travels. Some were sick, following the king in the hope of being cured of scrofula, a disease known as 'the king's evil'. From the thirteenth century, the English and French monarchies claimed an ability to heal this by the royal touch. In 1305–6 some 2,000 sufferers came forward. In addition, large numbers of the poor came to obtain doles. The accounts suggest that 666 men received doles each week on a regular basis, though the fact that the number did not change must cast doubt

on its reliability. On particular feast days, and on special occasions, far more poor might receive royal charity, as in 1300 when 1,700 benefited from the celebration of the future Edward II's seventeenth birthday.³⁸

There must have been a multitude of other camp followers and hangers-on. The records of Edward I's reign are uninformative about them, but the ordinance for the royal household drawn up in 1318 suggests that they were a serious problem, responsible for homicides, affrays, robbery and house-breaking. Prostitution was evidently common. No one at court, according to the ordinance, was to keep women of easy virtue, who were to be dealt with first by branding, and for repeat offenders, a period of forty days imprisonment.³⁹

The potential number involved in the king's travels was, therefore, very large. However, the transport arrangements suggest that in practice the travelling household may have been well short of the maximum of some 500 men. Carts and wagons were used to carry the heavy goods. Carts were mostly two-wheeled, normally hauled by teams of three horses and capable of taking loads of up to a ton.⁴⁰ Wagons were larger, ox-drawn vehicles: an elaborate one was bought in 1303, reinforced with iron and covered with planks, to carry the king's bread.⁴¹ The 1279 household ordinance specified the number of carts needed. The department of the wardrobe, which was the main household administrative section, needed three long carts. The pantry required one long and one short cart, the buttery the same and the kitchen one long cart with two short ones. Ten carts in all, therefore, were needed. This, however, was what was dictated by a reforming ordinance, and the reality may have been rather different. Where the ordinance required three carts for the wardrobe, in practice five were needed in 1277, three of them with three horses each, and two with four.⁴² On campaign, in the Welsh war of that year, six carts were needed.⁴³ In 1285, however, only two were needed – one with four horses and the other with three – to take the wardrobe equipment from Corfe to Dorchester, and just one cart, with five horses, to go on to Camel. Two was the normal requirement in this year.⁴⁴ However, a note of an ordinance produced later in the reign, in the time of the Scottish wars, sets out the requirements of the household for carts, giving much larger numbers, and specifying more departments. The pantry had thirteen carts, with fifty-two horses, but thirty-six horses had been sent to Edinburgh, which left the department with two long carts and four ordinary ones. The buttery had two horse carts and

two ox wagons, the larder one long cart and two short, the scullery seven carts, the saucery one ox wagon, the hall one cart and the marshalsea (the household department responsible for horses) three wagons, each hauled by six oxen.⁴⁵ The list does not include the department of the wardrobe. This document implies that the king would usually have travelled with twenty or more carts and wagons.⁴⁶ Such a figure, however, is negligible when compared to the 250 carts required by Queen Elizabeth's household in the later sixteenth century.⁴⁷

In addition to the carts and wagons needed to transport the heavy items, much was taken on packhorses. Even the king's own beds might be carried this way.⁴⁸ Accounts for 1300 show that three of the wardrobe officials, Peter Colingbourne, Walter Bedwin and Geoffrey de Stokes, used to have sacks with their beds and harness in the wardrobe carts, but new orders meant that they each had a horse to carry their equipment, with a boy to look after the horse, for an annual cost of £6 16s. 10½d.⁴⁹ In May 1293 there were forty-five packhorses, as compared to fifty carthorses among the 269 horses in the account of the marshalsea.⁵⁰ These numbers, of course, do not include all those horses that members of the household owned themselves.

Roads were not the only routes that Edward could use. Waterways might well be more convenient. If the king went by water, the requirements for boats and barges were usually considerable. In May 1300 Edward went from Peterborough to Soham in Cambridgeshire by boat; it took forty boats to carry his entourage and that of his eldest son. Later in the same month thirty-seven barges and boats were needed to go from Boston to Lincoln.⁵¹ There were some occasions, however, when far fewer boats were needed, suggesting a smaller entourage. In 1286 forty-eight men with just six boats were employed to take the households of the king and queen from Westminster to Gravesend.⁵² More strikingly, in February 1300 Sybil the Ferrywoman, and six men with her, were paid 3s. to take 'the king and his household' in her barge from Chertsey to Kingston, a distance of about ten miles. A single barge cannot have carried many people with their belongings; much of the household must have gone by land.⁵³ In the following year, early in July, the king and a few of his household followers went by sea from Bamburgh to Holy Island, at a cost of 1s. 6d. The rest of the royal entourage presumably remained on dry land. To have taken them all to Holy Island would have been a considerable operation; on their way north, it had taken twenty-five master mariners

with eighty-six sailors in various ships and boats to transport the king, his son and his household across the Humber estuary, at a cost of £7 12s. 3d.⁵⁴

Accommodation for the king and household as they travelled varied considerably. Royal castles and houses, and monasteries, could offer reasonable shelter. In the autumn of 1296, however, the king chose not to stay in the great monastery at Bury St Edmunds, but in a house in the town belonging to Henry de Lynn. Why he did this is not clear; according to the local monastic chronicle, many people regarded it as an affront, and considered that the accommodation Henry provided was hardly worthy of a king. The monks no doubt missed the lavish dinner that the king had paid for on his previous visit to Bury.⁵⁵ Some of the houses the king stayed in were probably even humbler. It seems unlikely that Adam Hert, of Lambruscayt near Carlisle, had a substantial establishment, yet it was there that the king stayed for a night on his return to England after the battle of Falkirk in 1298. He and his men did £4 worth of damage. This was not uncommon; John FitzJohn, the king's host at Birdsall in Yorkshire in October 1304, suffered damage to his property assessed at 13s. 4d.; the same sum as was paid to Thomas Baret at Wooler in Northumberland.⁵⁶ Halts in small villages were common. A man such as Philip le Lardener of Hessle, near York, must have been surprised to find himself acting as host to the king, and is hardly likely to have had grand accommodation to offer his guest, and could certainly not have provided for any large number of those in the royal entourage.⁵⁷ Harbingers went ahead of the main royal entourage, to try to organize lodgings, but the situation for the members of Edward's household must have often been like that described by Peter of Blois in Henry II's reign, when 'there was very frequently fierce and bitter struggle among the courtiers over a hovel. They fought with swords for lodging that it would have unworthy for pigs to quarrel over.'⁵⁸ Tents appear to have been used more on campaign than on travel within England; in 1304 the poulterer's department bought a tent that cost over £5, the account specifying that it was for use in war.⁵⁹

The needs of the king's household extended far beyond accommodation. Food had to be acquired, normally by using the royal right of purveyance, or compulsory purchase. The requirements were substantial. On just one day, when the king was at Hereford in the autumn of 1292, the kitchen used four and a half oxen, four calves, seven pigs, ten and a half sheep, eighteen lambs, five gallons of blood, six goats, six rabbits, one pheasant, a dozen partridges,

eighteen mallard ducks, three dozen woodcock and 2,200 eggs, as well as quantities of milk and butter. There were also herrings and cod.⁶⁰ The pantry would, of course, have in addition supplied ample bread.

There was no regular pattern to the king's travels, no standard annual routine. Meetings of parliament often brought the king to Westminster in the spring and autumn, but parliaments could be held elsewhere, and at different times of the year. These meetings were the main occasions when Edward stayed in one place in England for any length of time. In Wales and Scotland, the military situation could result in his spending long periods resident in one place, particularly in winter when campaigning was difficult. He spent most of July and August of 1282 in Rhuddlan, and returned there on 7 November, not to leave until 12 January in the following year. He wintered in Wales again in 1294–5, staying at Conwy from late December to early April, with the exception of two weeks in January when he pushed deep into Gwynedd, reaching Nefyn on the Llyn peninsula.⁶¹ In Scotland, Edward spent November, December and January of the winter of 1301–2 at Linlithgow, and in 1303 he arrived at Dunfermline on 5 November, not to depart until the end of February 1304.

In contrast to the situation in Wales and Scotland, it was not usual for Edward I to cease travelling in the winter months in England, even though road conditions must have been more difficult then. For example, his itinerary for January 1277 shows that he travelled about 200 miles in the month, making nineteen stops as he went from Oxfordshire to Worcester and back (Table 8.1).

January and February 1293 saw him travel from Newcastle upon Tyne south to the midlands. The one very lengthy stay he made over the winter was from October 1306 until March in the following year, when he was too ill to move from Lanercost priory in Cumberland.

Rates of travel varied considerably. It was not common to travel over twenty miles in a day, and fifteen miles seems to have been a comfortable distance. In April 1276 Edward was in East Anglia, and went from Royston, to Balsham, to Bury St Edmunds, to Lavenham, and then to Witham, stopping for just one night at each. The distances travelled were 18, 23, 11 and 27 miles. Later in the year, five nights were spent in different places in the south-east – Battle, Winchelsea, Romsey, Monks Horton and Canterbury. The distances involved were 12, 12, 14 and 11 miles. In October the king went from Evesham to Brill, with stops at Swell and Woodstock;

Table 8.1 Edward's travels in January 1277.⁶²

Date	Location	Distance
1 Jan	Bampton (Oxon)	
3 Jan	Highworth (Wiltshire)	12 miles
4 Jan	Ogbourne (Wiltshire)	15 miles
5 Jan	Marlborough (Wiltshire)	1 mile
8 Jan	Ogbourne(Wiltshire)	1 mile
9 Jan	Highworth(Wiltshire)	15 miles
10 Jan	Bampton(Oxon)	12 miles
11 Jan	Burford (Oxon)	7 miles
12 Jan	Bruern (Oxon)	4 miles
14 Jan	Oddington (Gloucs)	24 miles
18 Jan	Blockley (Worcs)	31 miles
20 Jan	Evesham (Worcs)	11 miles
21 Jan	Pershere (Worcs)	7 miles
22 Jan	Worcester	9 miles
26 Jan	Pershere (Worcs)	9 miles
27 Jan	Evesham (Worcs)	11 miles
29 Jan	Broadway (Gloucs)	10 miles
31 Jan	Cold Norton	10 miles
1 Feb	Woodstock	11 miles

the daily distances were 16, 20 and 17 miles. In January 1300, a long journey from Berwick to Windsor saw an average of just over twelve miles a day. The first section was slow, but from Durham onwards the pace was just over fifteen miles a day.

It does not appear that travel plans were normally made long ahead; it was not easy to predict where the king would be. At the end of July 1304 Edward, then in Scotland, announced that he proposed to go hawking in Essex, Middlesex and Hertfordshire at Michaelmas, two months ahead. Such plans were not always easy to put into practice, and by the end of September the king had reached no further south than north Yorkshire. He never got his hawking.⁶³ The evidence of preparations for a royal arrival suggests that it was a matter of weeks rather than months that arrangements were made. Wooden buildings could be put up quickly. In 1297 John le Convers was sent from Ipswich to William Frank's manor near Harwich a couple of weeks ahead of the king, to build a chapel and to repair chambers for the king and his children. For the next stage of the king's journey Walter of Ashwell was sent to Ipswich almost three weeks in advance, to construct a chapel

next to the chamber that Edward would use in St Peter's Priory.⁶⁴ In May 1300 the sum of £16 6s. 3d. was spent on the Archbishop of York's manor of Cawood in readiness for the queen's intended arrival in June. The plan was that Queen Margaret would give birth to her first-born son there. In the event, she went into labour earlier than expected, and the baby was born when she and the king reached Brotherton.⁶⁵

The routes that the king and his officials chose often varied, even when the destination was the same. The main route from London to the north can be identified from the system of Roman roads and the evidence of the fourteenth-century Gough map. A letter written early in Edward II's reign refers to 'the high road via Ware, Royston and Huntingdon'.⁶⁶ From Huntingdon (where the bridge was destroyed by ice during a flood in the winter of 1293–4⁶⁷) the route went on through Stamford, Grantham, Newark, Blyth, Doncaster, to Pontefract and York. From there the route was straightforward through Thirsk, Northallerton and Durham to Newcastle.⁶⁸ The king went north on Scottish affairs on many occasions from 1291 to the end of the reign; on no occasion did he go all the way along this main route, either on his way out or on his return. It was only in 1303 and 1304 that he went through Ware and Royston. His preferred route was through St Albans. From there he might take a reasonably direct route to Grantham, but in 1298 he swung north-east to Bury St Edmunds and Thetford. Rather than go through Doncaster and Pontefract, he more frequently crossed the Humber by ferry, going through Hull to Beverley, which was visited in eleven out of sixteen journeys. His route from Thirsk to Durham varied; puzzlingly, in 1301 and 1306 he went through Lazenby (west of Middlesbrough), a place also visited on return journeys from the north in 1298 and 1304. The same stopping points were not always used. Edward did not stick to the same roads going north from Newcastle. When he went north to Berwick late in 1299, he took the coastal route through Northumberland, going through Warkworth, Embleton and Bamburgh, but on his return took a more direct path from Bamburgh to Alnwick and then to Newminster, just outside Morpeth. This latter route was the one he used on the way north in 1301, and again in 1303 (though then he went to Roxburgh, not Berwick). In 1304, returning from the successful siege of Stirling, he avoided Newcastle, crossing the Tyne at Tynemouth instead.

The majority of Edward's Scottish campaigns were launched from the east, with armies advancing from Berwick or Roxburgh.

Table 8.2 Edward's travels in June 1300.⁶⁹

Date	Location	Distance
1 June	Selby (Yorks)	
2 June	Sherburn in Elmet (Yorks)	9 miles
3 June	Pontefract (Yorks)	9 miles
8 June	Nostell (Yorks)	5 miles
9 June	Brotherton (Yorks)	8 miles
12 June	York	21 miles
13 June	Strensall (Yorks)	6 miles
14 June	Thirsk (Yorks)	20 miles
15 June	Cowton (Yorks)	17 miles
16 June	Wath Urn (Yorks) ⁷⁰	10 miles
17 June	Durham	24 miles
19 June	Evenwood (Durham)	15 miles
20 June	Bowes (Yorks)	14 miles
21 June	Brough (Westmorland)	14 miles
22 June	Brougham (Westmorland)	20 miles
23 June	Skelton (Cumberland)	8 miles
25 June	Carlisle	14 miles

In 1300, however, the campaign took place in Galloway, with Carlisle as a base. Again in 1306–7 the plan was to advance from Carlisle, though death thwarted Edward's intentions. The routes chosen to reach Carlisle on these two occasions were different. In 1300 he went from Durham, where he had been attempting in vain to make peace between the bishop and the cathedral priory, through Bowes, then across Stainmoor to Brougham and Carlisle (Table 8.2). In contrast, in 1306 he went from Durham to Lanchester, then to Corbridge and Hexham, and along the line of the Roman wall to halt at Lanercost, where he spent the winter.

Edward's journeys to the west were less frequent than those to the north. Again, the selected routes varied, avoiding what has been identified as the main road. This went from London to Windsor, crossing the Thames at Maidenhead, then on to Twyford and Reading. From there it went to Marlborough, and on to Bath and Bristol.⁷¹ The king never took this road all the way. In 1293, for example, he went on a far more circuitous journey from Bristol to London, going through Tetbury and Cirencester to Woodstock, and then to London via Brill, Wallingford and Windsor. This was probably because he was anxious to spend five days hunting at

Woodstock. The route he took suggests, as does much of the evidence of the king's itinerary, that there was no great benefit seen in following the main roads. It appears that lesser routes were quite adequate even for all the horses, carts and people that made up the royal household. From his study of inland transport in the fourteenth century, James Willard concluded that 'the records examined make it clear that the roads of the fourteenth century were not as bad as they are often pictured', and the royal itinerary confirms this verdict.⁷²

There were no maps to guide the king and his household. The king possessed at least one world map, but although this appears to have travelled with the king for a time, such maps could never have been used to find the way. Their purpose was largely decorative.⁷³ There is no evidence in Edward's accounts to show that there were any maps of England, or written guides of any kind, in the Crown's possession. The officials of the household must, however, have possessed a wealth of geographical knowledge. Royal messengers in particular would have extensive experience of travel, and could have provided advice. It is easy to imagine that local people would have provided information as to how best to travel from one village to the next, but a much wider awareness of distances, roads and river-crossings would have been necessary to plan journeys effectively.

There is little evidence that finding the way was ever a difficulty. In the mid-fourteenth century the Bishop of Bangor told a tale that is surely apocryphal. Edward was riding along a muddy dangerous road by night, in winter, and was rescued by his son who took his horse's bridle and walked ahead until the way was safe.⁷⁴ This, however, seems. Surprisingly, the records do not suggest that local guides were often hired, but there are some examples. Night journeys might need expert local knowledge, as when in December 1285 the king went from Cerne to Sherborne in Dorset. A guide was required in the following January to show the king the way to Wimborne in Wiltshire by night. One was hired for four days to help take a wardrobe cart from Petherton in Somerset to Exeter.⁷⁵ In May 1297 a local man was employed to take the king across the river Exe, and in November 1300 payment was made for men to show the king and queen the way from Penrith to Brough.⁷⁶

Edward I's itinerary suggests that the road network of England, supplemented by waterways, was quite sufficient for his needs. The network of roads linking towns and villages was such that it was

possible for him to take reasonably direct routes across the country. It was rarely necessary to do any work on the roads in preparation for his journeys; it was exceptional that in 1299 a payment of 45s. 2d. was made to the bailiff of Darlington to repair the bridge there.⁷⁷ The king's travels were not grand ceremonial progresses, such as the Tudor monarchy was to indulge in, but his entourage was nonetheless substantial, with heavy carts needed to transport equipment and supplies. There were many reasons that dictated the royal itinerary, as well as Edward's wars and affairs of state. The presence of important shrines or the attraction of good hunting can often explain the reasons why he went on particular routes. Edward's itinerary provides much evidence about travel and the roads that criss-crossed medieval England; it also provides an insight into the nature of medieval kingship.

The evidence of Edward's itinerary raises questions about some popular assumptions about medieval English roads, in particular that they were generally unusable during the months of harshest weather, and that their nature constrained the movement of large-scale entourage, giving little or no choice of alternative route. The picture that emerges is rather that of a road system that offered flexible choices of route even for the heavy traffic of the royal household, and even during the winter months. With his constant travelling, and the legislation in the Statute of Winchester for keeping roads wide and safe, it is evident that Edward understood how roads functioned as the arteries of the kingdom. The experience of being on the road surely helped to shape his kingship.

Notes

- 1 John E. Morris, *The Welsh Wars of Edward I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), pp. 130, 139; *Select Charters*, ed. William Stubbs, rev. H. W. C. Davis, 9th edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913, reprinted with corrections, 1951), pp. 465–6.
- 2 F. M. Stenton, 'The road system of medieval England', *Economic History Review*, 7:1 (1936), 1–21 (5–6).
- 3 B. P. Hindle, 'The road network of medieval England and Wales', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 2 (1976), 207–21. For summary details of Edward I's travels, see E. W. Safford, *Itinerary of Edward I*, parts I and II, List and Index Society, vols 103, 132 (London: Swift, 1974, 1976). Where I have not given specific references for the royal itinerary in this chapter, I have used these volumes. Safford did not use household accounts, but a comparison of his data with those provided by,

- for example, the household rolls in the National Archives (henceforth TNA) E 101/350/25 and E 101/350/27 suggests no serious problems.
- 4 Mark Morris, *A Great and Terrible King: Edward I and the Forging of Britain* (London: Hutchinson, 2008), p. 199.
 - 5 Robert Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075–1225* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 135–7, 140–1.
 - 6 Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 143.
 - 7 Mary Hill Cole, 'Monarchy in motion: an overview of Elizabethan progresses', in Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Elizabeth Goldring and Sarah Knight (eds), *The Progresses, Pageants, and Entertainments of Queen Elizabeth I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 27–45 (p. 33).
 - 8 Thomas Frederick Tout, *Chapters in the Administrative History of Mediaeval England: The Wardrobe, the Chamber, and the Small Seals*, vol. 2 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, repr. 1967), p. 81. The move of the chancery 'out of court' is discussed by David A. Carpenter, 'The English royal Chancery in the thirteenth century', in Koucky Fianu and DeLloyd J. Guth (eds), *Écrit et pouvoir dans les chancelleries médiévales: espace français, espace Anglais* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Fédération internationale des instituts d'études médiévales, 1997), pp. 25–53 (pp. 26, 45).
 - 9 Tout, *Chapters in the Administrative History*, p. 74.
 - 10 *Liber quotidianus contrarotulatoris garderobae: Anno regni regis Edwardi Primi vicesimo octavo*, ed. John Topham (London: J. Nichols, 1787), p. 27.
 - 11 Felicity Heal, 'Giving and receiving on royal progress', in Archer, Goldring and Knight (eds), *The Progresses, Pageants, and Entertainments of Queen Elizabeth I*, pp. 46–61.
 - 12 'Chronicon vulgo dictum chronicon Thomae Wykes', in *Annales Monastici*, ed. Henry Richards Luard, vol. 4 (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1869), pp. 6–319 (pp. 259, 264).
 - 13 London, BL, Add. MS 8835, fol. 42v.
 - 14 *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, ed. Wendy R. Childs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp. 130–1.
 - 15 TNA: E 101/13/36, no. 38. In the event, the people of Nottingham were spared; the king never went there at, or close to, Easter.
 - 16 Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, pp. 141–2.
 - 17 BL, Add. MS 8835, fol. 21.
 - 18 Howard M. Colvin, Arnold J. Taylor and R. Allen Brown, *The History of the King's Works*, 2 vols (London: H.M.S.O., 1963), vol. 2, pp. 584–6, 862.
 - 19 *The Chronicle of Bury St Edmunds 1212–1301*, ed. Antonia Gransden (London: Nelson, 1964), p. 83.
 - 20 'Annales de Wignoria', in *Annales Monastici*, vol. 4, pp. 355–564 (pp. 516–17); Morris, *A Great and Terrible King*, p. 272.
 - 21 Willelmus Rishanger, *Chronica et annales*, ed. Henry Thomas Riley (London: Longman, 1865), p. 398.

- 22 *The Chronicle of Bury St Edmunds*, p. 157.
- 23 *Liber quotidianus contrarotulatoris garderobae*, pp. 25, 35–6, 37, 39. The statement in this account book that St Alban's head was at Ely is clearly a mistake, with St Botolph intended.
- 24 *The Chronicle of Bury St Edmunds*, p. 157.
- 25 For a recent discussion, see S. A. Miles, *Parks in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
- 26 Robin S. Oggins, *The Kings and Their Hawks: Falconry in Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 82–108.
- 27 *Nicholai Triveti annales*, ed. Thomas Hog (London: English Historical Society, 1845), p. 282; *Records of the Wardrobe and Household 1285–1286*, ed. Benjamin F. Byerly and Catherine Ridder Byerly (London: H.M.S.O., 1977), p. 39.
- 28 The royal itinerary was often influenced by Eleanor's desire to visit her properties: see Sara Cockerill, *Eleanor of Castile* (Stroud: Amberley, 2014), pp. 204–5, 267–9.
- 29 Rob Poulton, *A Medieval Royal Complex at Guildford: Excavations at Castle and Palace* (Guildford: Surrey Archaeological Society, 2005), pp. 12, 147.
- 30 Morris, *A Great and Terrible King*, pp. 291–2. Edmund's funeral at Westminster did not take place until April 1300, for he had asked not to be buried until all his debts were paid: *Liber quotidianus contrarotulatoris garderobae*, pp. 33, 46–7.
- 31 *Documents Illustrating the Crisis of 1297–98 in England*, ed. Michael Prestwich (London: Royal Historical Society, 1980), p. 64.
- 32 *Rôles Gascons*, vol. 3, ed. Charles Bémont (Paris: Impr. Nationale, 1906), pp. clxxxiii–cxciv; BL, Add. MS 7965, fols 96–7.
- 33 Printed in Tout, *Chapters in the Administrative History*, pp. 158–63.
- 34 Thomas Frederick Tout, *The Place of the Reign of Edward II in English History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1914), pp. 270–314.
- 35 Michael Prestwich, *Edward I* (London: Methuen, 1988), pp. 134–5.
- 36 John Carmi Parsons, *Eleanor of Castile: Queen and Society in Thirteenth-Century England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), p. 87.
- 37 *Liber quotidianus contrarotulatoris garderobae*, pp. 319–20.
- 38 *Liber quotidianus contrarotulatoris garderobae*, p. 20; Prestwich, *Edward I*, p. 113. I discussed some of the evidence for royal almsgiving in 'The piety of Edward I', in W. Mark Ormrod (ed.), *England in the Thirteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1984 Harlaxton Symposium* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1986), pp. 120–8.
- 39 Tout, *The Place of the Reign of Edward II*, p. 313.
- 40 There is some discussion of carts in James F. Willard, 'Inland transportation in England during the fourteenth century', *Speculum*, 1:4 (1926), 361–74 (363), and in James F. Willard, 'The use of carts in the fourteenth century', *History*, 17 (1932), 246–50.

- 41 BL, Add. MS 8835, fol. 7v.
- 42 Tout, *Chapters in the Administrative History*, pp. 44, 163.
- 43 TNA: E 101/3/15.
- 44 *Records of the Wardrobe and Household*, p. 3.
- 45 TNA: E 101/371/7.
- 46 The household ordinance of 1318 specified that there should be twenty carts for the various departments of the household: Tout, *The Place of the Reign of Edward II*, p. 301.
- 47 Cole, 'Monarchy in motion', p. 34.
- 48 BL, Add. MS 8835, fol. 9; *Liber quotidianus contrarotulatoris garderobae*, p. 51.
- 49 *Liber quotidianus contrarotulatoris garderobae*, p. 98.
- 50 TNA: E 101/13/97. There is another version of this roll at TNA: E 101/97/13.
- 51 *Liber quotidianus contrarotulatoris garderobae*, pp. 59–60.
- 52 TNA: E 101/351/30.
- 53 *Liber quotidianus contrarotulatoris garderobae*, p. 51.
- 54 BL, Add. MS 7966a, fols 33, 34.
- 55 *The Chronicle of Bury St Edmunds*, pp. 130, 134.
- 56 BL, Add. MS 8835, fols 43v, 44r.
- 57 *Liber quotidianus contrarotulatoris garderobae*, pp. 162, 180.
- 58 Quoted in Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 141. The household ordinance of 1318 suggests that there should be thirty-nine harbingers in all, with one for each section of the household: Tout, *The Place of the Reign of Edward II*, pp. 311–12.
- 59 BL, Add. MS 8835, fol. 18r.
- 60 TNA: E 101/353/2.
- 61 *Book of Prests of the King's Wardrobe for 1294–5*, ed. E. B. Fryde (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. xxxii.
- 62 Data from Safford, *Itinerary of Edward I*, part I, pp. 71–2, and TNA: E 101/350/25. The distances shown are those from the last place on the itinerary.
- 63 Oggins, *The Kings and their Hawks*, p. 94.
- 64 BL, Add. 7965, fols 4v, 14r.
- 65 *Liber quotidianus contrarotulatoris garderobae*, p. 93.
- 66 TNA: E 101/13/36, unnumbered document.
- 67 David Harrison, *The Bridges of Medieval England: Transport and Society 400–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 78.
- 68 Stenton, 'The road system of medieval England', 8, 11.
- 69 Data from Safford, *Itinerary of Edward I*, part II, pp. 156–8, and *Liber quotidianus contrarotulatoris garderobae*, pp. 38–40.
- 70 Given in the records as Wothum, and identified by Safford, *Itinerary of Edward I*, part II, p. 157, as the Wath Urn in Stanwick, near Melsonby.
- 71 Harrison, *The Bridges of Medieval England*, pp. 55–6.

- 72 Willard, 'Inland transportation in England', 374.
- 73 P. D. A. Harvey, 'Maps of the world in the medieval English royal wardrobe', in Paul Brand and Sean Cunningham (eds), *Foundations of Medieval Scholarship: Records in Honour of David Crook* (York: Borthwick Institute, 2008), pp. 51–6 (p. 52).
- 74 Beryl Smalley, *English Friars and Antiquity in the Early Fourteenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1960), pp. 211–15, 219, 338.
- 75 *Records of the Wardrobe and Household*, pp. 3, 6, 14.
- 76 BL, Add. MS 7965, fol. 17v; *Liber quotidianus contrarotulatoris garderobae*, p. 75.
- 77 *Liber quotidianus contrarotulatoris garderobae*, p. 26.

The pilgrimage road in late medieval English literature

Shayne Aaron Legassie

Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a pilgrimage road. Economic historians concede that the practice of pilgrimage exerted tangible effects on the development of cathedrals, monasteries and towns, but they quickly add that there is no conclusive evidence that pilgrimage was the primary impetus behind the construction or maintenance of any medieval English roads.¹ As is the case with most of the important pilgrimage destinations of medieval Christian Europe, English shrines tended to spring up along routes that had been formed and maintained for economic or administrative purposes.² If any road can answer to the name 'pilgrimage road' it is Watling Street, which conveyed Chaucer's pilgrims from Southwark to Canterbury. And yet this well-known and frequently trafficked route had been laid down by the Romans in order to link the administrative centre of London with the large settlement at Canterbury and beyond to the port at Dover.³ Even roads that were developed in the late Middle Ages, such as the one followed by pilgrims to the famed image of the Virgin at Woolpit, owed their existence to secular agendas.⁴ This is not to say that pilgrims did not contribute to the increased demand for roads that characterized late medieval England, but rather that they were one group among many who did so, and very probably not the most important or numerous of those groups, which included royal entourages, armies and people travelling for commercial purposes.⁵

Enter the anthropologist: strictly speaking, there *is* such a thing as a pilgrimage road. Victor and Edith Turner's influential *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* presents a schismatic vision of the pilgrimage road. On the one hand, that road is a material thing made by humans, something that can be seen in space and traced on a map: 'The pilgrim trails cut across the boundaries of provinces, realms, and even empires.'⁶ On the other hand, the pilgrimage road is mapped in abstract,

phenomenological terms: 'Indeed, even when pilgrims return by the way they came, the total journey may still be represented, not unfittingly, by an ellipse, if psychological factors are taken into account. For the return road is, psychologically, different from the approach road.'⁷ Adopting a stance distinct from the economic historians discussed above, the Turners mention the materiality of the road only in passing, and their subsequent treatment of the pilgrimage road relies on a bracketing of its economic and political dimensions.

This brief introduction to the discussion of the pilgrimage road in the disciplines of history and anthropology suggests that the pilgrimage road belongs to that rare species of ideational phenomena whose impact on the material world renders the question of whether they 'really' existed or not somewhat superfluous. Pilgrims travelled on roads, but those roads were not established for the purpose of pilgrimage. Yet because the pilgrimage road figures so vividly in the cultural imaginary of the Middle Ages the reality of its historical existence is almost beside the point. Much like the Easter Bunny or the invisible hand of the market, the pilgrimage road shapes cultural practice and organizes ideas because and *not* in spite of its dubious ontology. A brief survey of several genres of medieval English writing suggests that the pilgrimage road served a number of artistic and ideological purposes precisely because as a concept-become-thing it could mediate between the world of ideas on the one hand and an array of material practices on the other. There is a sophisticated body of scholarship on the representation of pilgrimage in medieval English literature, yet little is written about the literary representation of the pilgrimage road.⁸ As an earthbound track and as path to the transcendent, as a stage for being what one most is and as a crucible for becoming what one is not yet, the pilgrimage road was a uniquely powerful tool for fixing and contesting artistic and social orthodoxies.

Politics, polemic and the pilgrimage road

Whenever a medieval text identifies a road with the act of pilgrimage, whenever it highlights the presence of pilgrims as the salient feature of that road, it usually does so with some rhetorical calculation or self-interest or political investment in mind. An order issued by Edward II in 1346, for example, characterized the road that passed through Strood to Canterbury as one traversed by pilgrims in its effort to make the citizens of Strood, rather than the

crown, responsible for the cost of its upkeep.⁹ More complex rhetorical uses of the pilgrimage road can be seen across a spectrum of medieval English writing, in texts that were written variously to document historical events, provide entertainment and inspire devotion. A long tradition of Christian thought in which progress along the pilgrimage road served as a metaphor for the individual's earthly life laid the groundwork for politically invested uses of the idea of the pilgrimage road.¹⁰ Allegory, in particular, demonstrates the manner in which this intellectual tradition could be adapted to take the complexity of an individual life and distil its triumphs and its adversities into the iconic image of the pilgrim on the road; Guillaume de Deguileville's fourteenth-century *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* or the opening of Dante's *Divine Comedy* are two of the better known medieval examples.¹¹ Augustine's ontological and historical-allegorical image of the pilgrim drives much of this tradition.¹² The polemical and iconic power of the pilgrimage road lies precisely in its radical, universalizing reduction of an individual human life to an instantly apprehensible image. The details singled out by a given writer when describing the appearance of the pilgrim on the pilgrimage road could thus come to constitute the pure, unvarnished 'truth' of the person him/herself.

William Thorpe, inveighing against the practice of pilgrimage, avails himself of this very rhetorical strategy. Thorpe insists that there is a difference between 'true' pilgrims, who dedicate themselves to contemplation and good deeds, and 'false' pilgrims, who use devotion as an excuse to engage in the earthly pleasures of an actual journey. The compromised spirituality of 'false' pilgrims is imagined in this way:

I knowe wel that whanne dyuerse men and wymmen wolen goen thus aftir her owne willis and fyndingis out on pilgrim pageyngis, thei wolen ordeyne biforehonde to haue with hem bothe men and wymmen that kunnen wel synge rowtinge songis, and also summe of these pilgrimes wolen haue with hem baggepipis so that in eche toun that thei comen thoru3, what with noyse of her syngynge, and with the soun of her pipinge, and with be gingelynge of her Cantirbirie bellis, and with the berkyng out of dogges aftir hem, these maken more noyse than if the king came there away with his clarioneris and manye other mynstrals.¹³

The company of false pilgrims is at its most transparent when it is on the road: a cacophony of misguided impulses and misplaced priorities, sound that signifies nothing. When revealing the questionable devotion of another fictional pilgrim company, Langland

made the true nature of their spiritual pursuits visible by placing them on the road:

Pilgrymes and palmeres plighthen hem togidere
 To seken Seint Jame and seintes in Rome;
 Wenten forth in hire wey with many wise tales
 And hadden leve to lyen al hire lif after
 I seigh somme that seiden thei hadde ysought seintes:
 To ech a tale that thei tolde hire tonge was tempred to lye
 Moore than to seye sooth, it semed bi hire speche.
 Heremytes on an heep with hoked staves
 Wenten to Walsyngham – and hire wenches after.¹⁴

The illustrator of the Ellesmere *Canterbury Tales* provides a non-polemical visual equivalent to these passages from Thorpe and Langland. His decision to represent Chaucer's pilgrims as though they are in the process of their journey is so familiar that it perhaps seems like an inevitable one. Nevertheless, the *General Prologue* describes the pilgrims not only, or even principally, in terms of their appearance on the road, but also in terms of their style and behaviour in their respective homes. We know, for example, of the books at the head of the Clerk's bed, of the quality of the Franklin's bread and ale and of the many carts of dung hauled by the Plowman, and yet the pilgrims all appear in the Ellesmere portraits heading to Canterbury astride their horses. Moreover, in terms of gender construction and gender performance *The Canterbury Tales* plays precisely on the gap between a pilgrim's identity at home and on the road. Elsewhere, I have argued that in Fragment VI of the *Tales*, masculinity is interrogated through the representation of the travelling body of the pilgrim, 'a body suspended between the institutional, domestic, and civic spaces in which it symbolically and materially justifies and exercises its power, and stages the delicate attempts at maintaining and making sense of that power away from home'.¹⁵

If the pilgrimage road of allegory provided writers with a way to epitomize the individual, it also yielded another tool for tendentious argument: the convention of representing impediments to pilgrimage as threatening, sinister diversions from an ultimate goal. These obstacles to the pilgrim's progress often take on the form of scurrilous, misshapen humans or even wild animals, as is the case with the allegorical pilgrimages of de Deguileville and Dante, respectively. Many of the chroniclers who wrote about the so-called Peasants' Revolt of 1381 seem to have had this convention in mind.¹⁶ In these chronicles, interrupted pilgrimages play

a conspicuous role. Henry Knighton mentions that the rebels not only freed prisoners in jails but also compelled pilgrims (*peregrinos*) to join their ranks.¹⁷ Thomas Walsingham accords the disruption of pilgrimage a more prominent place, accusing the inciters of the rebellion in Kent of the following: 'Immediately blocking all the roads used for pilgrimage to Canterbury, and detaining all pilgrims no matter what their status was, they forced them to swear the following oath: first that they would remain loyal to King Richard and the commons, and would accept no king who was called John.'¹⁸ The most elaborate account of the rebels' interference in pilgrimage comes from the French chronicle writer Jean Froissart, who spins a breathless narrative about the dangerous devotional journey of the king's mother:

On the day that these malicious people of the county of Kent came to London, the mother of the King of England, the princess of Wales, was returning from Canterbury, and she came from her pilgrimage there. She found herself in great peril of being lost on account of them, because these malicious people approached her carriage and they treated her very insolently, on account of which the good lady was in great fear that they would do some villainy to her or her ladies. Nonetheless, God protected her, and she came in one day from Canterbury to London, for she did not dare to pause for a rest along the road.¹⁹

These chroniclers all utilize the rebels' disruption of pilgrimage in the same way that they do the rebels' destruction of charters and written documents: to present their actions, to borrow the words of Steven Justice, as 'nothing less than a threat to order and culture'.²⁰ Knighton mentions in passing the conscription of pilgrims in the same breath as their law-flouting emancipation of prisoners. In Walsingham's account, the rebels impose an oath on pilgrims, one that not only threatens to obliterate social distinction and to intrude into the question of royal succession but that also apparently thwarts the pilgrims' completion of their much more sacred oath of pilgrimage.²¹ Froissart imaginatively entertains the violation and murder of the king's mother, while emphasizing the effrontery of the squalid mob that dares to approach her royal carriage. Of course, the road from Canterbury to London did see its share of pilgrim traffic, and the progress of actual pilgrimages may have been halted. Nevertheless, it is also evident that the chroniclers of the events of 1381 underscored the pilgrimage function of the road to Canterbury in order to crystallize indelible images of the rebels' contempt for ecclesiastical and temporal authority. But

what accounts for the ease and the frequency with which diverse authors could use the pilgrimage road as a lens for understanding everything from the human condition to a popular uprising?

The pilgrimage road as heterotopia

The rhetorical usefulness and versatility of the pilgrimage road in medieval England is due in no small part to the fact that it functioned in cultural practice as what Michel Foucault calls a 'heterotopia'. Foucault suggests that heterotopias are a universal feature of all societies, and that they function similarly to utopias except for the fact that 'they are actually localizable'.²² Like utopias, heterotopias provide both a critical commentary on the 'illusory' nature of 'all real space' or they function in a compensatory way, 'creating a different space, a different real space as perfect, as meticulous, as well-arranged as ours is disorganized, badly arranged and muddled'.²³ Examples of such spaces offered by Foucault include the cemetery, the prison and the Jesuit utopian colonial experiments in Brazil. Furthermore, heterotopias are most often ritually demarcated as 'different' spaces, often demanding that those who enter them undergo some sort of ritual.²⁴ It is this last quality that is the most evident heterotopic feature of the medieval pilgrimage road. It was confession and the ritualized assumption of pilgrims' clothing, staff and purse that allowed the pilgrim to 'enter' the pilgrimage road.²⁵ Less apparent, perhaps, are the critical and compensatory ends to which the pilgrimage road was put in medieval English literature. What is particularly interesting about the pilgrimage road as a heterotopia is that, at the very same historical moment, in the same culture, it was marshalled in both its critical and its utopian dimensions.

In *The Book of Margery Kempe* the pilgrimage road appears as space in which the arbitrary and abusive sexual politics of the bourgeois household are laid bare for the world to see. For the *Book's* protagonist, one of the most vexing aspects of domestic life is the obligation to engage in sexual intercourse with her husband. Margery Kempe's initial pilgrimages to English shrines, monastic communities, anchorholds and ecclesiastical centres such as York and Canterbury coincide with her prolonged attempt to free herself from this obligation. On the road from their pilgrimage from York to another devotional stop at Bridlington, the Kempes discuss Margery's desire to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Initially, her husband's response is far from assuring. Kempe's narrative states,

‘Dan went þei forth to-Brydlyngton-ward in rygth hoot wedyr, þe forn-seyd creatur hauyng gret sorwe & gret dred for hyr chastite.’²⁶ Initially, Kempe’s husband asks that Margery resume conjugal relations with him, eat meat and pay off his debts in exchange for his permission to travel to Jerusalem, a price that Margery finds too high. Margery’s husband at last consents to both the vow of chastity and her planned pilgrimage to Jerusalem on the condition that Margery pay his debts before her trip and that she eat meat with him on Fridays as she had in times past.

The coercive proposition he offers Margery, permission to travel in exchange for the sexual activity that she finds so repugnant, dramatizes the extent to which the ideologies surrounding marriage authorized the brutal and repeated sexual abuse of married women, as both Sheila Delany and David Aers have observed.²⁷ *The Book of Margery Kempe* harnesses considerable power as a critique of women’s sexual obligations in marriage from the fact that it stages the moment of Margery’s ‘dred’ of her chastity outside of the domestic sphere. The unsettling nature of this episode, its ability to make visible forms of violence that are normally not thought of as violence, owes much to its setting on the pilgrimage road.²⁸ The suggestion of a forced sexual encounter on that road has the potential to startle readers who might otherwise be uncritical of the very same actions if they were to unfold inside the Kempes’ household.

As a whole, the narrative of these social, economic and sexual negotiations en route to Bridlington singles out seemingly insignificant details (its very first sentence states that Margery was ‘beryng a botel wyth bere in hir hand & hir husbond a cake in hys bosom’) that lend it a homely, quotidian realism.²⁹ It is in the violation of spatial expectations, in the placement of domestic objects, concerns and scenarios onto the space of the pilgrimage road, that *The Book of Margery Kempe* makes conjugal rape legible as such; in the narrative of life on the road, the reader is offered a discomfiting new perspective on life in the home. To similarly jarring effect, the *Book* states that before these pilgrimages, Margery realizes that she would rather ‘etyn or drynkyn þe wose, þe mukke in þe chanel’ than have conjugal relations with her husband.³⁰ This statement is made at the very moment of the *Book*’s most sustained focus on the Kempes’ matrimonial bed, and at this very moment the narrative ventures into the squalor of the urban street for an image to render the force of Margery’s repulsion towards sexual intercourse with her husband. In the

way in which this statement substitutes food for excrement, sexual intercourse for excrement-as-food, the way in which it juxtaposes the most intimate space of the household with the filthiest space of the town, it wreaks havoc on the idioms of domesticity that were emerging in late medieval England. As Felicity Riddy has compellingly argued, England witnessed the development of an increasingly dominant bourgeois notion of *home* in the late Middle Ages. This conception of the domestic sphere relied on the increased division and specialization of spaces within the structure of the timber-framed house. Of central importance to this delineation and regulation of the use of space was the privatization of activities such as sexual intercourse and the purging of bodily waste. Riddy observes that “‘Burgeis” domesticity locates these and similar kinds of activities – perhaps especially activities relating to regimes of the body – within the home and develops ideas of privacy to protect and sustain them.’³¹ What makes the *Book*’s treatment of the pilgrimage road qualify as heterotopic is that it uses that space to estrange readers from the seemingly inevitable sexual politics of the bourgeois household, subverting its defining values.

If in *The Book of Margery Kempe* the pilgrimage road is a heterotopia that casts into relief the gender inequalities of the household, it is used to a quite different end in *The Stanzaic Guy of Warwick*.³² In the *Stanzaic Guy* the pilgrimage road is a heterotopic space that supplements, rather than simply exposes, the inadequacies of its social formation of interest: the royal court. The *Stanzaic Guy* opens with its protagonist’s triumphant homecoming and his marriage to his long-beloved Felice. Shortly after the marriage, Guy laments that he has killed so many men to achieve his worldly success:

For mani a bern and knight hardi
 Ich have ysleyn sicklerly
 And strued cites fale
 And for ich have estrued mankin
 Y schal walk for mi sinne
 Barfot bu doun and dale
 That ich have with mi bodi wrought,
 With mi bodi it schal be bought
 To bote me of that bale.³³

Guy leaves his pregnant wife to go on pilgrimage and returns home at the end of his life, living as a hermit and concealing his identity

until his death.³⁴ Together, the court and the pilgrimage road constitute a circuit within which Guy's chivalric career can synthesize its early secular motivations with its later salvific concerns.³⁵

As a heterotopia, the pilgrimage road provides more than just an 'other place' for Guy to suffer and to atone for the violence that has assured his courtly success; it is not simply the means by which the character purges after the violent binges of his early career. The way in which the plot of the romance cycles from the pilgrimage road to the court and back again allows the narrative to confront and correct a problem inherent in the political workings of its fictional courts: those of King Triamour in Alexandria, the Emperor of Germany and King Athelstan of England. The figure of the repentant Guy embodies this limitation: that success at court is predicated on the self-interested exercise of lethal force. This is problematic not just for the salvation of the individual knight's soul but also for the long-term stability of courtly life. Collectively, Guy's challenges demonstrate that the court's over-reliance on military violence ultimately leaves it vulnerable to corruption from within by the very figures who have been elevated because of their martial prowess. The narrative offers a series of dishonourable figures, who wield force to achieve their corrupt desires for acquisition and revenge. These characters menace the lives of less powerful, but more honourable, chivalric subjects. As a poorly dressed pilgrim, Guy comes to the rescue of the Earl Jonas, a crusading knight condemned to death with his sons unless he can find a champion who can settle the conflict between King Triamour, his captor, and the Sultan; Tirri, his friend who has been unjustly imprisoned by a politically influential adversary; and finally the King of England himself, who is being attacked by the King of Denmark and his African giant, Colobrand. These battles follow a similar plot trajectory. Guy encounters a distressed man on the pilgrimage road. Guy, concealing his identity, agrees to come to the aid of the distressed man and to fight his villainous – and in two cases, monstrously large – adversary. Finally, Guy is accompanied back to the pilgrimage road by one person, to whom he reveals his identity far from the court and its material rewards.

The pilgrimage road is a compensatory heterotopia in that it exists in this romance as the indispensable counterpart and support for the royal court. What makes the pilgrimage road both compensatory and supplementary is that its existence does not for a moment call into question the dominant values of the court;

rather, the pilgrimage road is a place exterior to the court from which the court can be delivered from the logical consequences of its own overvaluation of military force. Physical strength can still be celebrated as the court's most cherished value because those who abuse that strength in an unjust way are extirpated by a figure whose exteriority to the court guarantees his incorruptibility. Because each of these challenges begins and ends on the pilgrimage road, Guy's entanglements with courtly politics seem to happen as if by chance and to be devoid of any political or economic calculation. *The Stanzaic Guy of Warwick* largely distances its hero from the libidinal drives of courtly life, converting him into the avenging defender of courtly values, which can no longer be defended from within the court itself. As a pilgrim, Guy does not reject chivalry's secular ambitions, but rather becomes their most perfect champion. One sees this most evidently in Guy's repeated rejections of certain material rewards, especially silken clothing. Upon defending the King of Alexandria, Guy is offered silk clothing from the Sultan, but rejects it, saying 'Suche clothes non kepe Y' (line 1061) and asks instead for 'mete and drink' (line 1066). Later, the daughter of the German Emperor makes Guy a similar offer:

Th'emperour cleped his douhter a mayde,
 'Leve douhter,' to hir he seyde,
 'Kepe this pilgrim tonight.'
 Sche him underfenge ful mildeliche
 And dede bathe him ful softliche,
 In silke sche wald him dight.
 Ac thereof was nothing his thought;
 Both of gode armour he hir besought. (lines 2152–9)

Guy's rejection of rich clothing in favour of his poor pilgrim's weeds, armour and sustenance is a sign of his distance from courtly priorities; even though his acts of piety and atonement take place at royal courts, the romance is careful to keep Guy disentangled from the vain ambitions of the courtier. Unencumbered by courtly vanity, the pilgrim knight is called on to save the court from itself. *The Stanzaic Guy of Warwick* is one of many Middle English romances in which the knightly protagonist takes to the pilgrimage road. Collectively, these pilgrim romances also call into question the individual knight's relationship to the court and to the larger world, while also expanding on the thematic possibilities of chivalric romance itself.

The pilgrimage road in Middle English romance

In chivalric romance, the road of pilgrimage and the road of knightly adventure are not one and the same. Both the road of adventure and the road of pilgrimage are leveraged by romance to think about the knight and his relationship to the larger world, but each road places a different accent on that relationship. Mikhail Bakhtin singled out the road as a paradigmatic example of the 'chronotope' in fiction. Bakhtin coined this term as an alternative to the passive, tableau-like associations evoked by a term such as 'setting', in an effort to illustrate the complexity and historical variety of the ways in which fictional space and narrative time have been brought into dialogue with each other. According to Bakhtin, the road is unique in its ability to express in spatial terms the temporal developments of human life, so that 'an intersection always signifies some turning point' in that life of a character and '[r]oad markers are indicators of his fate and so on'.³⁶ Even in its early, folkloric uses, the chronotope of the road has an analytical function, being used to isolate the exceptional life of the protagonist from the 'everyday life' that is 'spread out along the edge of the road itself, and along its sideroads'.³⁷ Expanding on Bakhtin's observations, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht has argued that the chronotope of the road is so central to the development of the novel that knowledge of its evolution in literature would yield an understanding of the history of 'man's relation to space and time, and of the range and the limits of human agency within larger religious, cosmological, philosophical, and even scientific worldviews'.³⁸ The heuristic power of the road in literature is found in concentrated form in the pilgrimage road of Middle English romance, in which the knight's relationship to the larger world is interrogated thoroughly.

In many romances, perhaps most famously in Chrétien de Troyes's *The Knight of the Cart*, the road of adventure is an extension of the court and its concerns. The characters of Chrétien's fictional courts know about Lancelot's decision to take the infamous ride in the cart instantaneously, in a way that relinquishes any claim to realism. Lancelot, on the other hand, is repeatedly taken off guard by everyone's knowledge of the event. On the road of adventure, the improbable speed with which intelligence about the knight travels suggests a world in which *all* of the knight's actions on that road are to be understood in relationship to the vicissitudes of his standing at court, its upward or its downward trajectory. In Chrétien's romance, the road is laid bare before the

panoptical gaze of the court, and the travelling knight can neither return that gaze nor escape it. On the other hand, in the *Stanzaic Guy*, the optical vector that connects the road to the court runs in the opposite direction of the one in Chrétien's *The Knight of the Cart*. From the pilgrimage road, Guy can view the court from a distanced standpoint, and even intervene in its affairs without being seen or interpellated by it in return. The lack of optical reciprocity between the court and the pilgrimage road allows Guy to observe the world that made him, the world that seeks and needs him, without him in it. If the road of adventure is a chronotope in which the consequences of quotidian actions are intensified, the pilgrimage road as it is found in Middle English romance is one in which the consequences of quotidian actions are bracketed entirely; on the pilgrimage road, the protagonist experiences what could be called a time-outside-life.

Late medieval English romance uses this time-outside-life to meet a range of formal and thematic needs. In many medieval English romances, the trope of time-outside-life is used as a simple plot contrivance, deployed to speed up or slow down the narrative's approach to its climax. *Sir Eglamour of Artois* is perhaps the best example of how a romance can use the chronotope of the pilgrimage road to fast-forward to its desired end. Eglamour's pilgrimage to Jerusalem is nothing more than an economic way to register the passage of time that is needed for his son Degrebelle to reach adulthood and be reunited with him. The poem's hasty treatment of the pilgrimage makes it apparent that its only interest is in accelerating time and moving its characters forward through space; the entire journey is dispatched in one stanza:

Syr Eglamour, as ye may here,
 Dwelled in Holy Land fiftene yere
 The heden men among.
 Full dowghtyly he hym bare
 There ony dedes of armes ware
 Agayn them that lyved wrong.
 Be that fiftene yere were come and gon,
 The chyld that the grype had tane
 Was both sten and stronge.³⁹

Conversely, Arthur's pilgrimage to Jerusalem in *The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain* is little more than a pause that whets readers' suspense regarding Arthur's siege of Gologras's castle, which Arthur insists must be completed only after the pilgrimage is over.

Arthur's pilgrimage itself is treated even more concisely than Eglamour's, and can almost be seen as a time-outside-plot:

The Roy rial raid withoutin resting,
 And socht to the cieté of Criste, ovr the salt flude.
 With mekil honour in erd he maid his offering,
 Syne buskit hame the samyne way that he before yude.⁴⁰

A more complex use of the time-outside-life of the pilgrimage road is to be found in several Middle English romances, including *Bevis of Hampton*, *King Horn*, *Sir Isumbras* and, of course, *The Stanzaic Guy of Warwick*. In these poems, the knightly protagonist disguises himself as a pilgrim and returns to places where he is known by others, treating his home or other familiar haunts as just another stop along the pilgrimage road. The motif involves a sustained concealment of the knight's identity followed by its dramatic revelation; in the interval between the concealment and the revelation, the pilgrim-knight actually observes his own life without him at the centre of it. There are a number of factors that distinguish one romance's treatment of the pilgrim-knight commonplace from another's, including: the knight's motivations for concealing his identity; the identity of the person (or animal) who first recognizes the returning knight; the timing and dramatic context of this recognition; and whether the revelation of the knight's identity resolves the narrative's conflicts, or generates new ones; and so on.⁴¹ As the discussion of the pilgrimage road in *The Stanzaic Guy of Warwick* suggests, these differences in the treatment of the pilgrim-knight motif can reveal a lot about the intellectual priorities and stylistic proclivities of any given romance.

At the same time, the chronotope of the pilgrimage road has one consistent feature across these romances, and it is a feature that distinguishes it from the chronotope of the road of adventure: in allowing the disguised knight time-outside-life, it places its protagonist in the position of the Lacanian hysteric. According to Lacan, the hysterical subject is one who is anxiously aware of the gap between the sum of his or her inherent traits on the one hand and the 'master signifier' – the term used to locate the subject vis-à-vis other subjects – on the other.⁴² The discourse of the hysteric is always posed in the form of a question that attempts to account for the discrepancy between the subject and the titles and names by which he or she enters into relationships with others.⁴³ Slavoj Žižek has summarized the hysteric's question in this way: 'Why am I what I'm supposed to

be, why have I this mandate? Why am I ... [a teacher, a master, a king ...]?'⁴⁴ A stock scenario in these pilgrim-knight romances turns precisely on the protagonist's assumption of the hysterical position. In this commonplace, the disguised character is present at court while he is discussed by the people who know him best as though he is not present. Most often, the knight enters into conversation with his lover or his wife, although sometimes it is with the knight's friend or adversary.⁴⁵ Inevitably, the name of the knight is invoked by those characters who are unaware of his presence, even invoked by the disguised knight himself. These episodes defer the revelation of the knight's identity in the interest of posing the hysterical question of what it is, exactly, that makes him a lover, a husband, a lord, the very name by which he is called.

The recognition scene that occurs between King Horn and his paramour Rymenhild is an especially vivid example of the hystericizing effects of the phenomenon of time-outside-life. Horn, who dons pilgrim's clothing on the road outside the city, returns to lay claim to Rymenhild, who has been forced to marry another man. When Rymenhild offers Horn a drink from a dish he responds: 'Drynke null I of dyssh: / Drink to Horne of horne' ('I will not drink from a dish, but rather drink to Horn from a horn [i.e. drinking vessel]').⁴⁶ Here, the alienation of the knight from his proper name is achieved through the play on words between the proper name and the common noun used to designate the vessel from which he drinks. Even after Horn drops this hint about his identity, his mystified lover does not recognize him, and the poem continues to juxtapose the words *Horn* and *horn*:

Ac wunder hire gan thinke
 Whi he bad to Horne drinke.
 Heo fulde hire horn with wyn
 And dronk to the pilegrym.
 ...
 Horn drank of horn a stunde.⁴⁷

Horn then tells Rymenhild that Horn has died. When she draws out a dagger to slay herself, Horn exclaims:

'Qwen, so swete and dere,
 Ich am Horn thin oghe.
 Ner canstu me noght knowe?
 Ich am Horn of Westernesse.
 In armes thu me cusse.'⁴⁸

Horn's question – 'I am your own Horn / How is it that you cannot recognize me?' – is not an unqualified assertion of who he is; rather, it is a hysterical demand that Rymenhild (for whom *hire horn* has come to be a drinking vessel) restore the unity of the man and his name.

Although most Middle English writers inherited the pilgrim-knight convention from insular French sources, it is tempting to see the enduring popularity of the hystericized knight as evidence of romance's generic self-consciousness. Especially by the late Middle Ages, entire traditions had grown up around pilgrim-heroes such as Guy of Warwick, Arthur and Bevis of Hampton.⁴⁹ The writings that told of a given hero's exploits could vary greatly from one another in terms of the languages in which they were written, their forms, tones, generic cross-pollinations and thematic concerns.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, an array of quite heterogeneous romances was often treated as a unified corpus united by nothing more than the name of their shared protagonist. The most well known example of the use of the hero's proper name to designate a body or a tradition of romance writing is Chaucer's *Sir Thopas*, in which he gives examples of 'romances of prys', which include Horn, Bevis and Guy.⁵¹ In the sixteenth century, an English translation of Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives's *Instruction of a Christen Woman* decried the excesses of romance, 'those ungracious books' among whose English offenders numbered 'Arthur, Guye, Bevis, and many other'.⁵² Indeed, the lack of consensus in medieval and early modern debates about the value or the danger of reading romance could not have been promoted but by the fact that its participants, in referring to 'Arthur, Guye, Bevis, and many other', could be talking about entirely different texts.⁵³ Like the pilgrim-knights at the centre of their plots, these Middle English romances might be imagined as posing the hysterical question (invoking Shakespeare's Juliet): 'What's in a name?'

Conclusions

This essay began by considering the divergent fortunes of the pilgrimage road in two academic disciplines. One discipline, history, has traditionally treated the possibility of the existence of the pilgrimage road as an empirical question grounded in surviving data about medieval material culture. The other discipline, anthropology, initially theorized the pilgrimage road as primarily a symbolic or psychological phenomenon. A consideration of the pilgrimage

road in medieval English literature suggests that its presence across a range of texts is attributable in great part to the fact that, in the Middle Ages, the pilgrimage road likewise resided somewhere between the material and the phenomenological. As an allegorical abstraction for the course of a human life, the ideational pilgrimage road could be superimposed over a geographically 'real' setting. In documentary and literary writings, this superimposition served many different ends. As both heterotopia and chronotope, the pilgrimage road was a conceptual space in which elements of the material world could be distilled to their purest essence. For most of the writers discussed above, the pilgrimage road provides a time and a space outside life, where the elusive, chimerical complexity of life itself might be apprehended. It is not surprising, then, that the pilgrimage road should provide an apt setting for literary works that want to think in metaliterary terms – to think, in other words, about what it is that those literary texts actually are and what it is that they might become to posterity.

One could choose from an array of works written or translated in medieval England to demonstrate the metaliterary or metadramatic potential of the pilgrimage road: *The Book of John Mandeville*, the York Cycle *The Supper at Emmaus*, John Lydgate's *The Siege of Thebes*, the anonymous *Tale of Beryn*, the Middle English translations of *The Romance of the Rose* and *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, Langland's *Piers Plowman* all come to mind. In the interest of space, one final example will have to suffice – that of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. The debate about how to interpret the pilgrimage frame of that work has too long a history to unfold here. Most arguments have been divided along lines that will now perhaps be predictable to the reader of this essay: whether the pilgrimage frame was developed in some sort of quest for 'realism', or whether it is best understood in the allegorical dimension in which it is cast by the Parson. In other words, the interpretive disagreements have to do with whether the pilgrimage road of *The Canterbury Tales* is to be understood in material terms or in symbolic/phenomenological ones. Perhaps the most valuable contribution to the critical conversation about pilgrimage in *The Canterbury Tales* has been made by Dee Dyas, who demonstrates that Chaucer, like many other medieval writers, inherited a number of complex and contradictory ways of thinking about pilgrimage and tended to pick and choose from among them.⁵⁴ Thus, at times, the materiality of Chaucer's pilgrimage road is what most matters, whereas at other junctures it is predominately symbolic in nature. There

is one particular moment in the frame in which the allegorical is layered over the geographical in a way that produces the analytical distance of time-outside-life, namely, when the pilgrim Chaucer is startled from his reverie by the Host's abrupt question:

'What man artow?' quod he;
'Thou lookest as thou woldest fynde an hare,
For evere upon the ground I se thee stare.'⁵⁵

Thus begins the pilgrim Chaucer's failed attempt at reciting a romance followed by his rehearsal of a solemn prose treatise. Lee Patterson has viewed this sequence of *The Canterbury Tales* as a deliberate dramatization of the anomaly of writing a vernacular work like Chaucer's outside of the cultural ambit of the court. According to Patterson, Chaucer reflects on the uniqueness of his fictional enterprise by having his persona tell a series of two tales, neither of which proves 'adequate to the kind of poetry Chaucer is writing'.⁵⁶ This metaliterary reflection begins with the pilgrim Chaucer's eyes trained on the pilgrimage road, suggesting that the pilgrimage road is not exclusively a chronotope that yields up the world 'as it is' in a microcosmic form, nor one that looks ahead to the transcendence of earthly reality, but one that has also served writers such as Chaucer when they dreamed of readers and of worlds that might yet come into being.

Notes

- 1 Most arguments against the existence of pilgrimage roads are a response to H. Belloc, *The Old Road* (London: Constable, 1911). For an argument against the importance accorded to pilgrimage in the development of roads, see C. G. Crump, 'The pilgrim's way', *History*, 21 (1936), 22–33.
- 2 There are exceptions to this general rule, most notably St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai in Egypt. Pilgrimage locations initially chosen for their remoteness and inaccessibility are perhaps more common in eastern Mediterranean and Asian religions than they were in Latin Christianity. See Barbara Ambros, *Emplacing a Pilgrimage: The Oyama Cult and Regional Religion in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 143–74.
- 3 On Watling Street, see Howard Loxton, *Pilgrimage to Canterbury* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 1978), pp. 144–60; Christopher Taylor, *Roads and Tracks of Britain* (London: Dent, 1979) pp. 41–4; and F. M. Stenton, 'The road system of medieval England', *Economic History Review*, 7:1 (1936), 1–21.
- 4 Taylor, *Roads and Tracks of Britain*, pp. 136–7, demonstrates that the town of Woolpit enjoyed an increased prominence in the late Middle

Agnes due to the grant of a fair and the diversion of a road to it. It would only later become a pilgrimage centre. Although not as prominent today, Woolpit was renowned enough in the fifteenth century to be one of three pilgrimage destinations singled out for scorn by accused Lollard John Skylan, along with Walsingham and Canterbury: 'And that no pilgrimage shuld be do to the Ledfy of Falsyngham, the Ledfy of Foulpette and to Thomme of Cankerbury', *Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Norwich, 1428–31*, ed. Norman P. Tanner (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1977), p. 148.

- 5 For a summary of scholarship on roads and inland trade, see B. P. Hindle, 'The road network of medieval England and Wales', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 2 (1976), 207–21; and James Masschaele, 'Transport costs in medieval England', *Economic History Review*, n.s. 46 (1993), 266–79.
- 6 Victor Turner and Edith L. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 6.
- 7 Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage*, p. 22.
- 8 A brief list of works would include Donald Howard, *Writers and Pilgrims: Pilgrim Narrative and its Posterity* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980); Christian K. Zacher, *Curiosity and Pilgrimage: The Literature of Discovery in Fourteenth-Century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); Julia Bolton Holloway, *The Pilgrim and the Book: A Study of Dante, Langland, and Chaucer* (New York: P. Lang, 1992); and Dee Dyas, *Pilgrimage in Medieval English Literature, 700–1500* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2001).
- 9 See Diana Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England* (London: Hambledon, 2000), p. 228.
- 10 For the allegorical dimensions of pilgrimage see Gerhart B. Ladner, 'Homo viator: medieval ideas on alienation and order', *Speculum*, 42 (1967), 233–59, and F. C. Gardiner, *The Pilgrimage of Desire: A Study of Theme and Genre in Medieval Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1971).
- 11 See Guillaume de Deguileville, *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, ed. F. J. Furnivall and K. B. Locock, EETS es 77, 83, 92 (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, 1899–1904), and Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. Charles S. Singleton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).
- 12 For example, see St Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, ed. Eligius Dekkers et al., Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 38 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1956), commentary on Psalm 24.5: 'dismissus a te de paradiso, et in longinquam regionem peregrinatus, per meipsum redire possum, nisi occurras erranti' ('dismissed by you from paradise and alienated in a distant region, I am not able to return by myself unless you keep me from straying') (p. 137).
- 13 William Taylor and William Thorpe, *Two Wycliffite Texts: The Sermon of William Taylor 1406; The Testimony of William Thorpe 1407*, ed. Anne Hudson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 64. I have substituted 'th' for the 'thorn' character.

- 14 William Langland, 'Prologue', *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, ed. A. V. C. Schmidt (London: Dent, 1978), pp. 2–3, lines 46–9.
- 15 Shayne Aaron Legassie, 'Chaucer's Pardoner and Host: on the road, in the alehouse', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 29 (2007), 183–223 (206).
- 16 On the representation of the rebels as animals, see Susan Crane, 'The writing lesson of 1381', in Barbara Hanawalt (ed.), *Chaucer's England: Literature in Historical Context*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), pp. 201–21. On their representation as rude and physically foul, see Paul Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 34–51.
- 17 *Knighon's Chronicle 1337–1396*, ed. and trans. G. H. Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 210.
- 18 'Moxque uias omnes, quibus peregrinando itur Cantuariam, obsidentes, et peregrinos uniuersos, cuiuscunque condicionis existerent, arestantes, iurare compulerunt: primo, ut regi Ricardo et comunibus fidelitatem seruarent, et nullum regem qui uocaretur Iohannes acceptarent', *The St Albans Chronicle: The Chronica Maiora of Thomas Walsingham*, vol. 1: 1376–1394, ed. and trans. John Taylor, Wendy R. Childs and Leslie Watkiss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 412–13.
- 19 'En che jour que ces meschans gens de la conté de Kemt venoient à Londres, retournoit de Cantorbiela mère dou roy d'Engletière, la princesse de Galles, et venoit de pelerignage. Si en fu en trop grant aventure de estre perdue par eux, car ces mescans gens saloient sur son char en venant et li faisoient moult de desrois, de quoi la bonne dame fu en grant esmai de li meïsmes que par [aucune] cose il ne li fesissent violence ou à ses demoiselles. Toutesfois Dieux l'en garda, et vint un jour de Cantorbie á Londres, ne onques ne s'osa anuitier sour le chemin', Jean Froissart, *Chroniques de J. Froissart*, 15 vols, vol. 10, ed. Gaston Raynaud, (Paris: Renouard, 1869), p. 99; translation mine.
- 20 Steven Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 198.
- 21 Eamon Duffy demonstrates that pilgrimage vows were taken so seriously that people left behind money in their wills so that others could complete the vow in their place in the event that they died before being able to do so: see *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 194–5.
- 22 Michel Foucault, 'Different spaces', in James D. Faubion (ed.), *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, trans. Robert Hurley et al. (New York: New Press, 1998), pp. 175–86 (p. 178).
- 23 Foucault, 'Different spaces', p. 184.
- 24 Foucault, 'Different spaces', p. 183.
- 25 For a description of rituals completed by departing pilgrims, see Jonathan Sumption, *Pilgrimage: An Image of Medieval Religion* (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), pp. 168–75.

- 26 *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Sanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen, EETS os 212 (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 24.
- 27 Sheila Delany, 'Sexual economics, Chaucer's Wife of Bath, and *The Book of Margery Kempe*', *Minnesota Review*, 5 (1975), 104–15, and David Aers, 'The making of Margery Kempe: individual and community', in *Community, Gender, and Individual Identity: English Writing 1360–1430* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 73–1165, esp. pp. 90–2.
- 28 In fact, roads of all varieties serve as the scenes of narratives about rape. Chaucer's 'Wife of Bath's Tale' offers one example. Katherine Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), pp. 104–21, discusses more examples. For real cases of sexual violence on the pilgrimage trail see Susan Signe Morrison, *Women Pilgrims in Late Medieval England* (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 57–9.
- 29 *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 23.
- 30 *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 12.
- 31 Felicity Riddy, '"Burgeis" domesticity in late-medieval England', in Maryanne Kowaleski and P. J. P. Goldberg (eds), *Medieval Domesticity: Home Housing and Household in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 14–36 (p. 29).
- 32 The *Stanzaic Guy* is a translation of one part of the Anglo-Norman *Gui de Warewic*. Apparently it was intended to be a free-standing romance. See Alison Wiggins, 'The manuscripts and texts of the Middle English *Guy of Warwick*', in Alison Wiggins and Rosalind Field (eds), *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2007), pp. 61–80, and Laura A. Hibbard Loomis, 'The Auchinleck Manuscript and a possible London bookshop of 1330–1340', *PMLA*, 57 (1942), 595–627.
- 33 *Stanzaic Guy of Warwick*, ed. Alison Wiggins (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004), lines 340–8, p. 31.
- 34 As several critics have noted, one model for Guy's career is St Alexis. See W. R. J. Barron, *English Medieval Romance* (London: Longman, 1987), pp. 77–80, and David N. Klausner, 'Didacticism and drama in *Guy of Warwick*', *Medievalia et Humanistica: Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Culture*, 6 (1975), 103–19. Christ might be another model imitated by Guy. Roger Dalrymple, *Language and Piety in Middle English Romance* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000), pp. 123–4, demonstrates that the Middle English translator increased the number of formulaic references to the passion of Christ from seventeen in the Anglo-Norman to twenty-seven in the Middle English. Andrea Hopkins, in *The Sinful Knights: A Study of Middle English Penitential Romance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 77–80, sees a keener interest in piety in the Middle English version than in the Anglo-Norman.

- 35 Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 109–17, cautions against over-emphasizing the saintliness of Guy, arguing that his career is actually a ‘secular corrective’ (p. 109) to the transcendent values of hagiography.
- 36 M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 120.
- 37 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 120.
- 38 Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, ‘The roads of the novel’, in Franco Moretti (ed.), *The Novel*, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), vol. 2, pp. 611–46 (p. 614).
- 39 *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, in Harriet Hudson (ed.), *Four Middle English Romances: Sir Isumbras, Octavian, Sir Eglamour of Artois, Sir Tryamour*, 2nd edn (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2006), p. 124.
- 40 *The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawain*, in Thomas Hahn (ed.), *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), p. 58.
- 41 Terrence Cave, *Recognitions: A Study in Poetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), demonstrates the almost infinite ways in which recognition scenes produce meaning in literary texts.
- 42 Lacan, departing from Freud, argued that hysteria was not exclusively pathological, but rather also constituted one of four categories of discourse. In other words, the hysteric is a ‘place’ from which any subject can speak, regardless of gender. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX: On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge, 1972–1973 (Encore)*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 1999), pp. 14–17.
- 43 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III: The Pyschoses, 1955–6*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russell Grigg (London: Norton, 1993), pp. 170–8.
- 44 Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 113.
- 45 In ‘King Arthur and King Cornwall’, *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, King Arthur, disguised as a pilgrim, is insulted at length by his vassal. In *Stanzaic Guy of Warwick*, the pilgrim Guy goes unnoticed by his wife, his former friends and his adversaries. In *Bevis of Hampton* – in *Four Romances of England: King Horn, Havelok the Dane, Bevis of Hampton, Athelston*, ed. Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake and Eve Salisbury (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999), pp. 187–340 – Bevis is at first unrecognized by his lover but is recognized by his horse.
- 46 *King Horn*, in *Four Romances of England*, ed. Herzman, Drake and Salisbury, lines 1154–5 (p. 46).

- 47 *King Horn*, in *Four Romances of England*, lines 1161–4, line 1169 (pp. 46–7).
- 48 *King Horn*, in *Four Romances of England*, lines 1216–20 (p. 48).
- 49 Derek Pearsall, 'The English romance in the fifteenth century', *Essays and Studies*, 29 (1976), 56–83, shows that the most popular romances of the fifteenth century date from the previous two centuries. This fact contributed to the accretion of different versions of the same heroes' stories.
- 50 Guy of Warwick provides a good example of such a varied and at times even contradictory tradition. See Velma Bourgeois Richmond, *The Legend of Guy of Warwick* (New York: Garland, 1996).
- 51 Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 7.897–9, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), p. 216.
- 52 Cited in Helen Cooper, 'Romance after 1400', in David Wallace (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 690–719 (p. 695).
- 53 For these debates, see Hopkins, *The Sinful Knights*, pp. 70–5, and Cooper, 'Romance after 1400', pp. 690–7.
- 54 Dyas, *Pilgrimage in Medieval English Literature*, pp. 192–202.
- 55 Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 7.695–7, p. 212.
- 56 Lee Patterson, *Temporal Circumstances: Form and History in The Canterbury Tales* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 127.

The romance of the road in *Athelston* and two late medieval Robin Hood ballads

Christine Chism

This chapter explores the significance of roads as national connective tissue in *Athelston*, *The Gest of Robin Hood* and *Robin Hood and the Monk*. In *Athelston*, road-running across jurisdictions knits together diverse localities to catalyse more inclusive conceptions of England as nation.¹ By contrast, the late medieval Robin Hood ballads explore the pitfalls intrinsic to such border-stepping nation-building, the resistant possibilities of strategic interruption and mischievous re-engineering. The *Gest* and *Robin Hood and the Monk* use roads effectively to hijack connective modes of normative nation-building and experiment briefly with much more fluid modes of nation as improvisation. Ultimately, all three of these romances politicize road-running by asking whose roads are being travelled – are they common to all, networks between regions, extensions of civil sanctuary, or are they the king's to protect and sequester?

Roads are of interest to medieval romances because many romances share an imaginative emphasis on mobility – social, political, estates, cognitive and physical – which would seem to make roads a useful figure. However, many romances take roads surprisingly for granted, without mining specific roads for objective correlation. They imagine instead the trackless forests, wastes and battlefields that protagonists have to traverse laboriously as their quests cut through the landscapes. The idea of a prelaid road, with its undercurrents of history, precise local connection and common access, seems to resist the romance stress on individual proof, continual agon and aristocratic performance. In addition, a known, mappable road seems, at least in some cases, to hamper a social imaginary that profits from displacement into distant pasts and exotic landscapes in order to underscore the cognitive and interior processes of self-loss, struggle and dissimulation that imaginatively raise the stakes of chivalric adventure. Yet Robert Rouse

has recently drawn attention to the geographical selectivity that allows medieval romances to remap and therefore reimagine their worlds significantly.² Some romances – including *Athelston* and the Robin Hood ballads – do use mappable landscapes, locatable roads and their interruptions to intercede topically in discourses of region, nation and inter-nation.

Athelston and the Robin Hood ballads, however, deploy road-works in diametrically opposed ways because they stake very different claims in the courtly interests of Middle English romance. While *Athelston* fits squarely within traditions of family and local romance, defending gentle behaviour but fiercely critiquing monarchical high-handedness, the Robin Hood ballads situate themselves metacritically athwart the aristocratic conventions of Middle English romance, playing romance and romance parody by turns. Robin Hood claims status as an alternative lord of the greenwood, and models chivalric behaviour such as largesse and combat games to a variety of audiences. He mimics Arthurian romance habits, such as refusing to sit down to eat before encountering an unexpected guest (whether that guest has to be forced into attendance or not). He also popularizes forms of chivalric *trouthe*, by socially extending them towards the gentry, yeomanry, merchants and artisans tested for acceptance as fellows into the outlaw's band. If court-centred medieval romance were to pursue a social outreach programme, Robin Hood would be in charge. Yet he would also eye it askance. Robin Hood is polymorphic between and within various ballads and many of them situate him in violent opposition to the royal court and the city. An outlaw yeoman outside the institutional networks and evolving forms of civility that foreground romance articulations of family, estate, maintenance and nation is going to view some of their more predatory and self-maintaining connective mechanisms very differently than their inside investors. The Robin Hood ballads seize romance conventions both with delight and with scepticism, and the way they imagine the potential of roads as national connective tissue differs accordingly, as they search out tactics for disruption of aristocratic business as usual.

Geoffrey of Monmouth: a double history of roads

When *Athelston* and the Robin Hood ballads situate themselves concretely (if sometimes confusingly) in particular regions and the connections between them, they draw on and participate in the

larger historiographical traditions that construct and contest the meaning of the English landscape. One influential tradition in particular illuminates the roadworks of these two romances: the *Brut* romances and their ultimate source in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*. The link between road building and national consolidation in Britain is mythologized early in Geoffrey's *Historia*, where it occupies one of the narrative's brief pauses between civil strife and imperialist conquest. Scoffing at the idea of Roman origins for the great British roads, Geoffrey credits the British ruler, Belinus, as the first great road builder in Britain. Belinus built the roads as the apex of his campaign for his sovereign rule of the whole island. Belinus's road system binds the fractious regions and individuated cities into a phantasmatic unity:

Since there was now no one in the kingdom of Britain to resist him, Belinus took control of the entire island from sea to sea. He confirmed all the laws that his father had instituted and he made arrangements for the abiding dispensation of justice throughout the kingdom. Most importantly, he ordered that the cities, as well as the great roads that led into them, should enjoy the same privileges that Dunwallo had granted them. Discord, however, arose over the issue of these roads, since there was no one who could now say what their precise confines were. Therefore, wishing to remove any ambiguity from his laws, Belinus brought together all the workmen of the entire island and ordered that a new road be made, paved with cement and stone, that would run the length of the island, from Cornwall's sea to the shores of Caithness, in a straight line through each of the cities. He also ordered that a second road be built across the breadth of the kingdom, from St David's on the Irish Sea all the way to Southampton and passing through all the cities along the way. Two other roads he had constructed running diagonally through other cities. Then Belinus hallowed these roads with great honour and privileges, decreeing that any violence committed upon them would be punished by the king's law. If anyone desires to know more about all the works accomplished by Dunwallo and Belinus, let him read the Molmutine Laws, which the historian Gildas translated from British to Latin and that King Alfred later translated from Latin into English.³

In this passage the roads consolidate the physical fabric of nation. They serve as both concrete and notional webwork, rooted in geography but bridging all the internal borders of the realm between Logres, Cornwall, Wales and Alba (Scotland), and knitting together all the land's cities. So beautifully do they wed British geography to the king's sovereignty that they fall, as if by chance,

into a perfect abstract shape, a great double cross, with vertical, horizontal and diagonal branches, like a St Andrew's cross imposed upon a St George's one.⁴ It is thus fitting that the king hallows them as sacrosanct and free of violence, and the final authoritative stamp of Gildas and King Alfred – a monk joining with a king – make this moment paradigmatic: Belinus's otherwise beleaguered sovereignty claims a sacred power that is deployed in the service of peace and national unity.

There are several problems, however, with this lovely picture. First and most pragmatically, Belinus's brief shining moment is even briefer than most – his bellicose brother Brennius invades again two paragraphs later, and only an extraordinary intervention from their mother, Conwenna, averts another civil war. Second, no book written by Gildas on the Molmutine Laws has survived, and Alfred based his legal treatise on pre-existing Mercian Law, not Gildas. In other words, the monarchical–ecclesiastical alliance that Geoffrey ends with is a fairly transparent fabrication. Third, and strangest, if one turns back a page in Geoffrey to look up what privileges Dunwallo actually granted the roads and cities one finds a very different kind of hallowing going on:

Dunwallo ... made a decree ... that the cities and the temples of the gods should enjoy the special privilege that, should any fugitive or criminal flee to them, his enemies had to forgive his wrongdoings when he came out. Dunwallo declared that this law applied as well to the roads that led to these cities and temples ... In his day, highwaymen ceased to draw their swords, the rapacity of robbers was quelled, and no one committed any violence against anybody else.⁵

The contrast between the two kings' policies could not be greater. Dunwallo takes the right of sanctuary familiar to Geoffrey's Anglo-Norman audience, and extends it from the sanctuaries and temples of the gods, to the cities and then to the roads, a transmission that promises not just safety for the wrongdoer who flees to them, but actual forgiveness for his trespasses. It is as though the roads were being proleptically used to adjure the fundamental bonds of Christian behaviour, responding to crime with forgiveness rather than punishment. One might conclude that this is an insult to any sense of justice in the realm, since criminals can touch the road, and walk away free. Yet Geoffrey is careful to underline the surprising consequences of Dunwallo's roadside mercy: 'highwaymen ceased to draw their swords, the rapacity of robbers was quelled, and no one committed any violence against anybody else'.

Dunwallo's previous restoration of law climaxes in a merciful sanctification that extends from the temples imbuing even the road dust with an aura of peaceful community.

By contrast, Belinus places the roads at the service not of proto-Christian community, but of nation and sovereign. Belinus's roads do not forgive the wrongdoer, but rather threaten him: 'any violence committed upon them would be punished by the king's law'. Imagining community as sovereign nation, the roads do not free and regenerate but rather threaten and bind. And almost as an ironic echo, Belinus's regime is soon spent in an explosion of violence so extreme it is almost ecstatic, as he joins forces with his soon-to-be despotic brother to conquer Rome.

Geoffrey's double history of road building thus enacts the mixed potential of roads as they articulate different kinds of imagined community. Both Dunwallo and Belinus give roads extraordinary powers and hallow them, but to entirely different ends. Notionally, they are utterly contradictory routes for the king either (as Belinus) to deal out threatened justice or (as Dunwallo) to display profligate mercy. The outcomes of these two opposed royal policies are surprisingly paradoxical. On the one hand, letting the criminals walk free, forgiven, results in the cessation of roadside violence, re-instantiating lawful peace within the realm. On the other, threatening the king's law leads to an exposition of kingly power ferociously engaged in the service of monarchical self-enrichment – the first example of many in Geoffrey's text of a war of imperial conquest that will repeatedly strip Britain bare and eventually doom it to servitude. Geoffrey never resolves this contradiction.

Geoffrey's double history of the great roads of Britain informs subsequent popular romances featuring roads: including *Athelston* and two medieval Robin Hood ballad/romances, *The Gest of Robin Hood* and *Robin Hood and the Monk*. These texts highlight the double potential of roads we saw in Geoffrey to bind and to loose. These poems go out of their ways to use physical, geographically situated roads of England – most importantly the northern and southern extensions of Watling Street – as objective correlatives that articulate social relationships – between regions, estates, institutions and jurisdictions, in order to construct or deconstruct larger communities. Centralizing roads enables these poems to reimagine the configuration of the realm or intervene in its pre-emptive configuration by predatory authorities. I argue that *Athelston* emphasizes the connective potential of roads, building its networks to resist discourses of monarchical exclusiveness, while the Robin

Hood ballads capitalize on the attenuation of roads as sites where authorities of all kind become vulnerable and able to be pinioned for interrogation and co-option, in order to posit more fluid and improvisational social fellowships. Each text deploys roads as crucial parts of the medieval English imaginary that weds ideology to landscape in socially transformational ways.

Brothers of the road: the politics of friendship in *Athelston*

Athelston is interested in challenging the chivalric ideal of sworn friendship by bringing it down into the real world of material culture, politics and history, and showing its disastrous consequences. At the same time, the romance draws attention not just to the difficulties but also to the positive constraints of negotiating material experience. To do this, the romance becomes the beat cop of polity, treading out the roads, boundaries and wayside crosses that articulate London and Kent, from the governing centre of the realm to its southern borders. It thus resists the exclusive allure of sworn friendship as a basis for community by turning its gaze to the *many* networks of love, family, faith and community that are crucial to English polity, whose internal jurisdictions, agencies and divisions must be respected. The great south road of England allows the poem to explore physically and figuratively the interconnectivities of these networks and conduce to a more inclusive and gratifying vision of the realm.

The plot of the romance underscores these dynamics. Four messengers, Athelston, Wymond, Egelond and Alrike, meet by chance at a wayside cross, and for joy of the meeting, swear an oath of brotherhood. When the eldest of them, Athelston, becomes king of England, he rewards his brothers. He creates Wymond the Earl of Dover, and Egelond the Earl of Stone, and gives Egelond his own sister, Edith, in marriage. The third sworn brother, Alrike, a clerk, is made the Archbishop of Canterbury. Egelond and Edith give birth to two sons who grow into budding chivalric paragons, and the king often invites the whole family to his court and his counsels. Wymond becomes jealous of the king's attention to Egelond, travels to Westminster and, under an oath of secrecy, tells Athelston that Egelond and Edith are plotting to overthrow Athelston and set their own sons on the throne of England. Athelston is furious and believes him. Wymond returns to Dover.

The king sends a messenger to Egelond, summoning him and his family to Westminster by saying he wants to honour Egelond

by personally knighting his two sons. Edith, who is pregnant again, is overjoyed and the family hastens to Westminster, where Athelston immediately fetters them, throws them into prison and condemns them to death without a trial. When Athelston's queen, who is also pregnant, hears of this, she hastens to intercede with the king, begging at least for a formal trial before the parliament. Athelston is so furious at her intercession that he kicks her in the belly and kills the child in her womb; it is born dead a little while later. As soon as the queen recovers, she calls for a messenger, and sends him to Canterbury to fetch Alrike; if the queen's intercession carries no weight, perhaps the archbishop's will. The messenger rides the fifty miles to Canterbury in a single day, delivers the letter and travels back with Alrike the next day, sacrificing his horse in the process. When Alrike pleads for a public parliamentary hearing for Egelond, the furious king strips Alrike of his see and exiles him. The archbishop responds by threatening not only to excommunicate the king, but also to interdict the whole realm and ravage the land with hunger, thirst, cold, drought and sorrow. As Alrike leaves Westminster and starts down Fleet Street he meets up with a crowd of nobles, whom he tells what has happened. The knights resolve to defend the archbishop against the king and threaten that if the king doesn't free Egelond, they will break down the prison, all the king's halls, bowers, castles and high towers and throw him into a deep dungeon.

At this point, luckily, with the entire structure of the realm unravelling, the king backs down, and sends a messenger to Alrike, returning his episcopal paraphernalia. The king and the archbishop meet at Broken Cross, and the king kneels and capitulates, promising to free Egelond and his family. But the archbishop wants the truth to come out, so he ordains a trial by ordeal for everyone in Egelond's family. They must pass unscathed across a fire that is nine ploughshares in length. The trial by fire is held the next day at St Paul's Cathedral before an enormous crowd. Egelond goes first, unscathed, followed by the two children, also without harm and wondering at the fire's coolness. The best comes last; the pregnant Edith makes her way to the third ploughlength and immediately goes into labour, passes on after her pangs stop and, at the end, kneels down and gives birth to St Edmund. (Where but in medieval romance could this happen?) Archbishop Alrike forces the king, on pain of undergoing the fiery walk himself, to reveal Wymond as the plot's instigator. They reel in Wymond by sending a messenger to him with false news of Egelond's execution, and

Wymond hastens joyfully to London. There he is forced to walk the fiery gauntlet but is overcome by flames at that fateful third ploughlength. Egelond's two sons run quickly in and drag him out of the fire. The children ask him why he hated them so. He says he did it for love: the king loved him too little and Egelond too much. He is drawn behind horses through every street in London and hanged at the Elms. The poem ends wishing a similar death to all traitors. From this plot summary, one can clearly make out that the ideal sworn friendship of the poem's beginning comes into conflict with other forms of affective social affiliation: family, Christendom and finally the polity of England itself, with its complex, intricately articulated jurisdictions.

For *Athelston* is, above all, a story about networks. Uniquely, the wedded friends are four, not just two, a multiplication that eases the Ciceronian bifold knot of mutual identification within sworn brotherhood and opens additional space for internal jealousies and manipulations.⁶ Moreover, the vivid presence of other networks constantly turns the friends' gaze outward. Two of the friends are married and engaged in producing heirs; both their wives and their children play crucial roles in the action. One of the friends is a cleric who becomes the Archbishop of Canterbury: through him the fantastically potent international network of the church becomes a force to challenge the king's insular authority. Finally and surprisingly, there is the messenger, also named Athelston, whose mediatory labour binds the plot together; the poem takes a vivid interest in his itineraries, travel times and modes of transport. Athelston the messenger recalls the four friends' occupational origins as messengers and renders palpable the physical distances separating the friends, their difficulties in communicating with each other, the vulnerability of their relationships to en route manipulations and hopes of reward. The messenger conveys the sworn brothers from the interiorized realm of intense emotional exchange into a real-world landscape of transactional politics.⁷

As the messenger weaves back and forth across the breadth of Kent, he also binds into a powerful concord a litany of voices that protest the king's behaviour and point to the disastrous consequences of the oath of friendship. Among these are Athelston's queen who intercedes on behalf of the accused Egelond, her pitifully stillborn son whose murder at the poem's centre is all the more shocking for its apparent inconsequentiality, the archbishop who lays the realm under interdict and threatens to invade it with a foreign army and the nobles who threaten insurrection and

regicide. When the king decides to hear only Wymond's voice, and silence his family and subjects, every relation that holds the realm together begins to unravel. To an audience remembering Edward II or possibly experiencing Richard II's tyranny, as Elizabeth Ashman Rowe has argued, the noble's threats in particular would have stirred very uncomfortable memories.⁸ The nobles claim the right to revolt if the king does not grant their boon to restore the archbishop:

We schole drawe down bothe halle and boures;
 Bothe hys castelles and hys toures,
 They schole lygge lowe and holewe.
 Though he be kyng and were the crown,
 We scholen hym sette in a deep dunioun:
 Oure crystendom we wole folewe. (lines 525–30)⁹

[We shall drag down both hall and bowers, both his castles and his towers; they will lie low and hollow. Even though he is the king and wears the crown, we'll set him in a deep dungeon. We will adhere to our Christianity (i.e. we aren't going to put up with an interdiction)].

As the nobles threaten to shatter the infrastructure of monarchy to its foundations, they highlight it as only one network of imperatives working within larger, more potent ones, notably Christianity itself.

And it is not just Christendom, represented by Alrike, that delimits the king's sphere of influence: it's also the pressure of its own futurity, its capacity to bring forth heirs. There is a great deal of Anglo-Saxon resonance in the names of the characters.¹⁰ The king, Athelston, or 'noble stone', in his stony-hearted rage, effectively makes war on family and generation, wounding his wife and killing his son – and that's just the collateral damage – while threatening his sister, sworn brother and their children. The poem drives home the tragedy of his infanticide twice, first, when Athelston reminds Wymond of it just before executing him, and second, by making the dramatic birth of St Edmund the climax of Egelond's and Edith's vindication. Wymond arguably derives from Wig-mond, 'strife or battle hand'; Edmund from Ead-mund, 'blessed hand'. Just as Wymond's jealous love sows strife, lies and injustice that infect the whole realm and destroy the king's heir, the miraculous birth of Edmund marks the restoration of justice to the polity. In sum, the romance indefatigably provides layer upon layer of perspectives from which the consequences of the brothers'

friendship oath can be condemned by giving us intercessory wives, interdictory archbishops, rebellious knights, victimized children and even underappreciated messengers.

This romance layers these critical perspectives to orchestrate a complex, many-voiced polity, but its most distinctive strategy for concretizing polity works not through voice but movement. The element *mund* (OE 'hand') in so many of the poem's names gestures at the poem's larger focus on work, an energetic pragmatism that seeks real-world effects. Just as the love that binds the brothers is distilled from the gesture of coming together on the road, the mechanisms of polity operate through movement across the physical landscape of London and south-east England. The romance makes polity topographical, writing its many networks into the landscape of south-east England. The poem's intense geographic specificity places the friends' network in a context alive with significant landmarks and alternative viewing points, whose interposition usefully interrupts the passionate urgencies of the brothers' friendship.

A rough guide to Watling Street¹¹

After its strange inaugural wayside wedding, the romance wastes no time in giving its band of friends a local habitation and a name. When King Athelston endows his friends with two earldoms and an archbishopric he projects the circle of friends onto the political map of south-east England. However, the poem simultaneously makes it clear that the circle of friends has in turn been reshaped by the landscape. The trace-work of Athelston's friendly endowments extends in a line from the governing centre of the realm to its most famous southern port. This line keeps within the borders of Kent, which comes to synechdochize the realm at large; a role primed by chronicles and itineraria because it was the first line of defence against invasion from France.¹² The king's endowments situate the ex-messengers along one of the oldest, chief trade roads in England: the southern branch of Watling Street. South Watling Street was the first Roman road in Britain. The poem paints a vivid point-by-point picture of its itinerary, as it extends south-east from the king's palace at Westminster and transects London, from Broken Cross, through the Strand, to Charing Cross, and through Fleet Street. It crosses the Thames via London Bridge, which, historically, was lined with buildings and featured a mid-point chapel to St Thomas Becket. In Southwark the road becomes the famous

pilgrim's route to Canterbury. The poem depicts it leading past the village and castle of Stone, and thence to Steppynghourne, Ospringe and Blee and finally Canterbury itself – a city that historically served both as synodal centre for the church in England and as mercantile entrepot for the Cinque Ports and all the coastal trade in south-east England. Beyond Canterbury, the road leads to the great port of Dover with its tactically situated castle, where the stone road becomes the whale road to Calais and the fair fields of France.¹³ While not all of the place names mentioned by the poem are firmly identifiable with points on the historical Canterbury Road (Broken Cross and Blee, for instance, have several possible historical referents but no certain ones), there are enough identifiable landmarks to show that the poem goes out of its way to depict the contemporary route most likely taken on the historical road. The embedding of the four brothers, like beads on a necklace, along this great road ensures that, even in their ennoblement, the king, archbishop and two earls retain a trace of their former careers as messengers. They are brothers of the road, linked together now by another messenger, also called Athelston, who assiduously traverses the road between them, summoning them to the centre of power. Athelston the messenger is a crucial figure; throughout the poem, as the shared name suggests, the messenger Athelston provides an objective correlative for the king Athelston's will but also offers a way of scrutinizing the problematics of its outreach, the energy its governance expends, its capacity for overextension, exhaustion and interruption. The ideal circle of friends who met at a wayside cross has been reconstituted as the line of a radius extending from the centre of the realm to its border. Suddenly it is subject to lines of force: the gravitational pull of the governing centre, the centrifugal disorganization of the periphery. It must actively seek strategies to keep itself together.

King Athelston, sitting at Westminster, is mindful of this. When Wymond visits him to set his plot into motion, Athelston greets him with joy:

He sayde, 'Wecome, my derelyng.'
 The kyng hym fraynyd seone anon,
 By what way he had igon,
 Withouten any dwellyng.
 'Come thou ought by Cauntyrbury,
 There the clerkys syngen mery
 Both erly and late?
 How faryth that noble clerk,

The mekyl can on Goddys werk?
 Knowest thou ought hys state?
 And come thou ought be the eerl of Stane,
 That wurthy lord in hys wane?
 Wente thou ought that gate.
 How fares that noble kynght,
 And hys sones fayr and bryght
 My sustyr, yiff thou wate.¹⁴

[He said, 'Welcome, my love.' The king then immediately asked him by what way he had come without any delay. 'Did you come by way of Canterbury where the merry clerks sing both early and late? How fares that noble clerk who knows such a lot about God's work? Do you know how he's doing? And did you come by way of the Earl of Stone, that worthy lord in his hall? Did you go out of your way? How fares that noble knight and his fair, bright sons, and my sister, if you know?']

The king envisions any journey along the road as a way of reconnecting with the friends he has placed along it; reasserting contact, ties, news. It effectively makes a pilgrimage of friendship, rewriting the road to Canterbury as devotion not to the shrine of Becket but to the noble archbishop.

The journey also draws on another important medieval commemorative ritual. Essentially, it beats the boundaries of friendship, from one significant site to another, tracing its landmarks, and reminding participants of what is embraced within its trajectory – and what is excluded.¹⁵ The journey along the road rebinds, reminds and celebrates the brothers' friendly unity, just as Rogationtide processions performed the unity of their parishes. And just as the Rogationtide processions required repetition – they were the only ritual parish processions allowed to continue after the Reformation because, despite their implicit 'popery', they were simply too useful to discontinue – a journey along Watling Street both binds the friends together and materializes their relationship as a temporal one.¹⁶ King Athelston knows that the sworn friendship needs ritual reminder and reperformance. We are already far from the ideal, atemporal flash of loving coincidence that sparked their oath.

However, Wymond's jealousy of Egelond shows that the king's bound-beating pilgrimage is only a tactic. The road does not simply trace the bounds of friendship; it also cuts across the friends' sovereignties. Passage along it reminds not only of their

relationship but also of the material incommensurabilities of their circumstances. Like all articulations, it divides as well as adjoins their powers and jurisdictions.

Wymond, gifted with Dover, is the character that actuates this potential for division. And yet, in terms of the relative political value of their earldoms, it is difficult to argue his view of the king's favouritism for Egelond. Dover was one of the most strategic and entrusted lordships of the whole realm; the thirteenth-century chronicler Matthew Paris called Dover Castle the key to all England. William the Conqueror brought all of Kent into his control by giving Dover Castle to one of his constables, who became the guardian of the shore and warden of the five great trading ports, the Cinque Ports, crucial to the shortest channel crossing to Calais. The trade from these ports was responsible for enriching Canterbury itself, as the inland city where trade from all five of the ports could be gathered and coordinated.¹⁷

By contrast, Egelond's manor and village of Stone, while listed briefly in the Domesday Book, barely merits a mention in the earliest itineraries and descriptions of Kent. It is a tiny village close to Dartford and visible from the Thames; its thirteenth-century parish church, dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, had a beacon that became a landmark for sailors on the river, and caused the church to be called the Lantern of Kent. Stone's flint castle was built in the mid-eleventh century; a single forty-foot tower still survives; but it seems not to have been of much significance. It is also off the Canterbury Road – to get to it a traveller must detour north towards the Thames.

Thus in terms of the relative power and trust implicit in their earldoms, Wymond wins out with no contest. Why then does he envy Egelond? The poem suggests two reasons. The first is simple proximity. Stone is close to the king at Westminster, whereas Dover is a week's ride away. In the calculus of proximity as opposed to power, Wymond's distance from the king speaks louder than the value of his earldom. The second reason is more complicated. When Athelston becomes king and begins giving endowments, he transforms the unindividuated oath of brotherhood from a fellowship between like-minded equals into a ruler-centred gift economy, with its own force lines of self-fashioning and obligation. The endowments themselves are divergent and operate on different grids of value: tactical, political, ecclesiastical, proximal. But the clincher comes when Athelston gives his sister, Edith, to Egelond in marriage and she immediately begins producing children, two

fine sons and a third on the way. Athelston has brought Egelond into his own family in a way that opens the path to future endowments, entrustments and acts of loving kindness: and to the future itself in the bodies of Egelond's sons:

Bothe the Eerl and hys wyff,
 The kyng hem lovede as hys lyff,
 And here sones twoo;
 And offensythe he gan hem calle
 Bothe to boure and to halle,
 To counsayl. (lines 73–8)

[The king loved both the Earl [of Stone] and his wife and their two sons just as he loved his life. And oftentimes he would call them to counsel both in his privy chambers and his great hall.]

This family is kept close and brought into the king's counsel; they are his trusted and beloved advisors, caught up in the dailyness of governance.

Wymond on the other hand, remains alone and without family on the southern borders of the realm in his powerful castle by the sea. It is he, not Egelond, who is cast away to the very edges of the land and his plot strives to reverse their positions vis-à-vis the king's favour. His two journeys from Dover to Westminster at the beginning and end of the romance instigate the plot and mark its conclusion and yet, oddly, they are the only journeys the romance does not describe. He sets out from Dover and in one breathless instant he is with the king in London. Before his execution, Egelond's sons ask him why he hated them so and his answer is similarly breathtaking in its directness: King Athelston 'lovyd him [Egelond] to mekyl and me to lyte' (line 799) ('loved him too much and me too little'). Of all the characters in the poem, only Wymond's love keeps the immediacy that characterized the original oath of friendship – no sooner met than loving, no sooner loving, than wedding – and only he travels the road without touching it. All the other brothers operate in historical time, and their desires don't fly along the road, but have to walk or ride it, often painfully and at cost.

This contrast, between Wymond's violently disregarding directness and the other characters' pedestrianism, I argue, intensifies the poem's implicit critique of the initial oath of friendship – its ignorance of material or temporal constraints and the patience, labour and political acumen needed to negotiate them. Wymond's desirous volatility can be resisted only by the positively

constraining force of the material expressed in the topography of south-east England – the roads, stones and boundaries – the same silent backdrops to the initial friendship oath – that the characters must actively renegotiate as they perform their friendship with difficulty across a politicized geography held together only by such negotiations.

To that end, I argue, the romance repeatedly draws attention to the boundaries that mark competing jurisdictions and dramatizes the needful negotiations that take place at them. In particular, the messenger's second journey from the queen to Alrike at Canterbury gives a blow-by-blow account of the itinerary. Setting out from Westminster,

He rod be Charynge-cross
 And entryd into Flete-strete
 And sithen thorwgh Londone, I yow hete,
 Upon a noble hors.
 The messenger, that noble man,
 On Loundone-brygge sone he wan –
 For his travayle he hadde no los –
 From Stone into Steppyngbourne,
 Forsothe, his way nold he nought tourne;
 Sparyd he nought for myre ne mos.
 And thus hys way wendes he
 Fro Osprynge to the Blee.
 Thenne myghte he see the toun
 Of Cauntyrbery, that noble wyke,
 Therin lay that bysschop ryke,
 That lord of gret renoun. (lines 335–50)

[He rode on a noble horse by Charing Cross and entered Fleet Street, and then through London, I tell you. The messenger, that noble man, soon reached London Bridge, although he had no praise for his labour. From Stone to Steppingborne, truly, he would not turn from his way, and he didn't spare himself for either mire or moss (bog). And thus he goes his way from Ospringe to the Blee, where he was able to see the town of Canterbury, that noble place. Therein lived that reverent bishop, that lord of great renown.]

Part of the poem's geographical explicitness performs its interest in the dirty job of being a messenger.¹⁸ But this is not the only place the romance underscores the power of the boundary markers that signal different jurisdictions. While Alrike is on the king's turf at Westminster, the king can summarily strip him of his archbishopric. Conversely, Athelston only acknowledges the enormity

of Alrike's threat of excommunication and interdiction when they meet at Broken Cross, identified probably as Chester Cross, which marked the boundaries between Westminster and the liberty of the house of Lancaster, in the Strand between Westminster and Fleet Street. It is in Fleet Street, as Alrike leaves the king's jurisdiction, that he raises rebellion among the nobles. The final confrontation, where the truth is made to emerge by fire, showcases St Paul's Cathedral, which is both a subsidiary arm of Alrike's jurisdiction and the quintessential centre of London, where even the king is off his territory and subject not only to the miraculous will of God but also to the unrelenting gaze of his people. Finally, the ordeal renders distance itself terrifyingly tactile, a journey across a fiery landscape with its own internal boundaries – measured in laborious ploughshare lengths. It is only by passing across this painful topography that the romance conjures into public view the 'truth' of its own dialectics of love, hate and the reunification of the polity.

This reunification under Archbishop Alrike's energetic rule, however, enjoins its own significant silencings. Alrike ('all-realm'), as his name suggests, becomes the authoritative voice for the whole realm. He effectively replaces the voice of Athelston's injured queen – the only character the romance doesn't name. Elizabeth Ashman Rowe argues that this textual moment puts the final seal on the systematic silencing of the feminine in the poem.¹⁹ If, as Gordon Hall Gerrould argued, the romance's struggle between a monarch and an archbishop is haunted by the ghost of Thomas Becket's dispute with Henry II, Alrike effectively reverses the dynamic, striking a fatal blow to royal absolutism, if not the king himself, in the cathedral – not of Canterbury but of London.²⁰ Yet even the will of God as exemplified by Alrike is only revealed when it is worked out on the ground during the ordeal by Egelond, the children, Edith, Edmund and finally Wymond himself.

In fact, so vengefully precise is the romance's materialized imagination that it makes Wymond's punishment fit the transcendent modalities of his crime. I have argued that the poem condemns Wymond for an affection that, sparked by contingencies itself, spurns material contingencies and seeks to escape the earth. His sentence is to undergo the most painful journey of all. The character whose feet seem not to have touched the ground as he travelled is the only one who feels the bite of the flames in the ordeal fire. Too burned to walk further, he is then dragged through every street in London. Only at the end, derisively, by hanging, does he finally leave the ground, at, of all places, the Elms. The love that

began mid-journey at a wayside cross by a linden tree finds a worse tree and a gibbet at the end of its road. Wymond's fate is the final abjection of that original distillation of love between the brothers.

Athelston thus participates in the fourteenth-century critique of sworn friendship in a uniquely materialized way. It brings a chivalric ideal down to earth and shows its terrifying power and consequences. But in the process it also dramatizes a vision of polity that is resonant with independent voices and intimately embedded within the roadside topography of London and south-east England. It individuates the divergent agencies and interests of its minor characters and thus directs its readers towards social differences that can beget alliance rather than division if they are respected. In so doing it materializes a landscape for English polity, carefully articulated at significant boundaries and nodes of interaction. Ultimately, the poem lays aside the idealized atemporal bond of love with which it begins, urging the acknowledgment of wider and more inclusive networks of wives, children, citizens – and even lowly messengers – within the polity of the realm. It could never have done it without the roads.

Wayside distractions: the politics of roads in two late medieval Robin Hood ballads

Like *Athelston*, the late medieval Robin Hood ballads hark back to Geoffrey's ambiguous portrayal of roads as fabric of the divergent national communities of Belinus and Dunwallo. However, these ballads deepen Geoffrey's dilemma into a conflict that is played out not between the different polities of two kings, but rather between proponents of a sovereign nation and those of performed fellowship. On the one hand, there are the joined forces of king, sheriff, church and law who claim to agglomerate and represent the nation in their dealings together. On the other hand, there is a set of outlaws who are imagining and enacting their own improvised forms of community in playful exchanges, serious mercies and profligate forgivenesses of wrongdoing. Like the wrongdoers of Dunwallo's time, Robin and his men exploit the mobilities of the 'roads, cities, and the temples of the gods' but they do so to suborn the king's law and point out the harsh violence that underlies it. They thus problematize dominant articulations of nation as a network of powerful and privileged institutions, nation as hallowed by the self-serving collusions of monarchical and ecclesiastical power. Roads become sites that, precisely because they conjoin disjunct sovereignties,

demesnes and jurisdictions into networks, can be used to dismember them. At issue is Geoffrey's idea of roads as sanctuary for criminals v. roads as repressive arms of the king's law.

Seizing the road

Most pragmatically, in the diegetic worlds of the ballads, roads provide Robin's men with places they can watch and intervene without being seen or tracked. In various ballads they are frequently captured – in church, in town, at the sheriff's archery contest and in the forest itself – but they are never ever taken on the road. The road is thus their premier site of invulnerability. Whenever the game is afoot, or Robin wants it to be, it's to the road he sends his men. When John, in *Robin Hood and the Monk*, sets out to rescue his master, it's to the 'hye way' (line 150) that he goes.²¹

Many of these early ballads suffer from a confusion of location that comes from the constant amalgamation of different sources. A given ballad may shuttle back and forth between Barnesdale and Nottingham: the unincorporated green wood of Barnesdale, never subject to forest law and thus unable to be called forest in the legal sense, and the royal forest of Sherwood.²² Yet the *Gest* is never so precise in its topography as when it describes the stretch of road where Robin sends John to meet prospective dinner guests in Fitts I and IV: 'walke up to the Saylis, / And so to Watlinge Strete, / And wayte after some unkuth gest, / Up chaunce ye may them mete' (*Gest*, lines 69–72; 833–6).²³ The men go obediently: 'up to the Sayles' (line 77) and look east and west to no avail. It's when they look south, toward Barnesdale, that they see their future guest, the knight.

By the fifteenth century, this part of Watling Street had acquired ominous associations. Both inside the ballads' diegetic worlds and in late medieval records, it was associated with robbery, plunder and death. In his 1982 study, J. C. Holt carefully describes the location, and lauds the outlaws' tactical acumen:

Watling Street, the ancient name of the Roman road from London to Wroxeter, the modern A5, was also applied to the section of the Great North Road which ran from Ferrybridge, through Wentbridge and Barnsdale to Doncaster. Sayles, as Hunter showed, was a tenancy of the honour of Pontefract, and the name, as Dobson and Taylor pointed out, still survives in Sayles Plantation. From Sayles Plantation it was still possible, prior to the construction of the modern viaduct over the valley of Went, to observe all traffic crossing

Wentbridge, and from Sayles it was easy to intercept south-bound travellers in the high rolling country which they had to cross once they had ascended the winding road up the valley-side of the Went. For Robin and his men the setting was ideal, and this is registered in the legend: all the travellers whom he intercepts are travelling south.²⁴

Dobson and Taylor are even more sanguine in expressing the potential of Sayles Plantation as a lookout for illegal activities: 'Even today its potentialities as a place for concealed observation are obvious enough.'²⁵ The Went river carved a fairly deep channel into the magnesian limestone that underlies the geography (hence the necessity of the modern viaduct), and Sayles is on the south side of it, with a good view both of the bridge and of the uplands leading up out of the valley towards Barnesdale. The section of Watling leading though Barnesdale was notorious in medieval England for highway robbery, and both Joseph Hunter and Dobson and Taylor speculate that Robin Hood's activities there commemorate actual regional gang activity.²⁶ Robin's own preferred victims: 'these bisshoppes and these archbishoppes' (*Gest*, line 57) were targets on one occasion: Joseph Hunter notes that there was a massive robbery of the bishops of St Andrews and Glasgow and the abbot of Scone when they passed between Pontefract and Tickhill to meet up with twenty Barnesdale archers in the first years of the fourteenth century.²⁷

More suggestive is the association of Sayles with the honour of Pontefract, of which Sayles was a minor tenancy. In the thirteenth century, Pontefract had actually been located on the Watling of that time; Watling moved by the fourteenth century to the higher terrain it occupies in the ballads.²⁸ In the fourteenth century, Pontefract lay north-west of the Barnesdale stretch of Watling on a stretch of the Great North Road called Roman Ridge, but it converged with the fourteenth-century Watling in Barnesdale itself and then led south toward Doncaster. At the end of the *Gest*, Roger of Doncaster is one of the murderers of Robin Hood himself.

Throughout the fourteenth century, this stretch of road flanking Pontefract provided access not just for the dirty business of robbers but also for the even dirtier business of coercive kings and rebellious lords. One local tradition derives the name Pontefract from *Pontus Fractus* – broken bridge: it is a place where connections fail.²⁹ By the fifteenth century, Pontefract had already been associated with civil rebellion against two separate British monarchs, Edward II and Richard II. In the first two decades of the

fourteenth century, Thomas earl of Lancaster, Steward of England and thorn in Edward II's side, held Pontefract as one of his chief northern estates and extended the construction of its castle, known as Pomfret Castle. Thomas of Lancaster was chief among the barons responsible for raising an army against Edward II's favourite, Piers Gaveston, separating him from the king and sentencing him to execution. Between 1314 and 1318, after Edward's disastrous defeat at Bannockburn, as steward, Thomas of Lancaster effectively ruled England until Edward gained new constituencies and re seized monarchical power, this time endowing the Despensers as his deputies. When Thomas of Lancaster rebelled again in 1321, he was defeated, convicted of treason and beheaded at Pontefract, although his conviction was rescinded and the estates were restored to his heirs after Edward's defeat in 1327. Subsequently, a cult developed around him and Edward III tried three times to have him canonized.

However, Edward III's contrarian grandson, Richard II, backed the other team, rehabilitating Edward II and repeatedly advocating for Edward II's own canonization. As if in ironic allusion, it was at Pontefract Castle that Richard himself was said to have been murdered in 1400. Shakespeare's *Richard III* goes so far as to assemble a bloody lineage for it in the diegetic world of the mid-fifteenth century, placing there the massacre of Lords Grey, Rivers and Vaughan, who die crying out:

O Pomfret, Pomfret! O thou bloody prison!
 Fatal and ominous to noble peers!
 Within the guilty closure of thy walls
 Richard the Second here was hack'd to death;
 And, for more slander to thy dismal seat,
 We give to thee our guiltless blood to drink. (*Richard III*, III, iii,
 lines 9–14)³⁰

By contrast to all this bloodshed, Robin Hood's activity on the Great North Road in the *Gest* is surprisingly benign. The *Gest* does not even label him an outlaw; it abstains from the language of wolf's head and highwayman.³¹ In the *Gest* Robin doesn't kill on this road; instead he diverts. Travellers are stopped and induced to come to dinner. Depending on whether they demonstrate *trouthe* by honestly admitting the amount of money they are carrying, they are returned to the road either much lighter in their tackle, or considerably weighed down with acquired wealth and retainers. The *Gest*'s plot is extremely episodic. It is structured as a series of

challenges that escalate from individuals, such as Sir Richard at the Lee and the Sheriff of Nottingham's cook, to wider and more consequential social networks, including the Sheriff of Nottingham's and Abbot of St Mary's Abbey's involvement in the dispute with Sir Richard. Robin amasses power and influence as the *Gest* goes on, culminating in an encounter with the king himself, in which Robin Hood endows the king with his livery, but submits to his authority and returns with him to the court, only to gradually lose all his followers and finally return triumphantly to the greenwood at the end. In the light-hearted world of the *Gest*, Robin Hood repeatedly challenges travellers to enjoy a roadside distraction that displaces them from their usual networks and makes them declare themselves. Trust is demanded but, once given, is returned with considerable interest, as Robin's continual generosity to one guest, Sir Richard at the Lee, demonstrates. Bad faith, on the other hand, is met with generally playful retribution, which becomes fatal only under extreme provocation – as when, after two betrayals of the sheriff's word, Robin's men forcibly free Sir Richard from the sheriff's prisoner escort, and kill the sheriff in the streets of Nottingham itself.

That Robin works by interrupting the networks that run along these roads becomes understandable when we see those collusions in action – the way the local sovereignties of St Mary's Abbey, the regional high justice, the sheriff and the king are continually on the move to reinforce one another's exercise of power, or revenge against interlopers. Where the national networks of the road are broadened in romances such as *Aethelston* so that they become more inclusive, the ones in the *Gest* have turned into guarded monopolies. Luckily for Robin Hood and his men, authorities are obligated constantly to extend their powers and cement alliances by travelling along the road into each other's domains – as the justice does to reinforce the Abbot of St Mary's, or as the king does when he comes north at the end of the *Gest* to restore order. The outlaws know that the road is home to no one – and anyone passing along it, however powerful, can only depend on the staunchness of a limited retinue. It is consequently easy for Robin and his men to distract the monk, the sheriff and the king, to force them off their home turfs and resituate them into more improvised communities, through playful contests with the outlaws. Trust is the basis of play and it is fascinating to see a character like the king, at the ballad's end, coming to trust and even crave, by means of blows given and received, Robin's continually self-improvising forms of

mastery. In the end, the mischievous *Gest* achieves the monarchical overthrow that its darker roadside histories promise – but only phantasmally. The king returns from the forest wearing Robin Hood's livery and the people of Nottingham panic:

All the people of Notyngham
 They stode and beheld;
 They sawe nothyng but mantels of grene
 That covered all the felde.
 Then every man to other gan say,
 'I drede our kynge be slone:
 Come Robyn Hode to the towne, iwys
 On lyve he lefte never one.'³²

However, while the *Gest* merely suggests regicide, both in its roadside associations and in the figurative redressing of king by outlaw, an earlier ballad, *Robin Hood and the Monk*, comes much closer to delivering the violence the Nottingham folk in the *Gest* fear. In *Robin Hood and the Monk*, the stakes are higher and more personal than the *Gest*'s picture of institutional greed, self-maintenance and vengeance. Captured at the poem's beginning and trapped in the sheriff's jail, Robin's very life hangs in the balance. To break him out, Robin's men Little John and Much commandeer lines of roadside communication by waylaying the monk who identified and betrayed Robin to the sheriff. This monk is hastily bearing the news of Robin's capture south to the king, and John and Much don't stop at distraction. John ironically declares, 'I shal be the munkis gyde' (line 139). He accosts the monk as a traveller and fellow-victim of Robin Hood, offers to 'go with [him], with [his] leve, / And bryng [him] on [his] way' (lines 177–8), and he does catch hold of the monk's bridle in a guidelike way – just before grabbing the monk by the throat band of his cloak, pulling him from his horse and lopping off his head. John replaces the monk as a messenger and travels south in his clothes to tell the king of Robin's imprisonment. Richly rewarded and bearing the king's seal for conveying the welcome news, John returns along the road, bearing word of the king's great pleasure back to the sheriff. It is only an excuse to get inside his castle, where John can sneak into the dungeon by night, pinion the jailer – '“Now wil I be jayler”, seid Litul John' (line 279) – steal his keys and free Robin. In each case, the murder and role adoption of a person doing the dirty work of an authority figure opens the door for John's cooption of their social power and authority. John's disguises highlight the self-serving

collusions that knit together regional and national institutions of reward and punishment, while forcibly disarticulating them.

In effect, *Robin Hood and the Monk* places us squarely in the middle of Belinus's sovereign nation, not Dunwallo's. Belinus made the roads royal extensions of his will and his law, threatening the violent with vengeance, only himself to pursue one of the bloodthirstiest campaigns in Geoffrey's bloodthirsty narrative. Similarly, in *Robin Hood and the Monk* the authorities punish Robin ostensibly in the name of the law, but in actuality because the violence of punishment gives the monk, the sheriff and the king a vengeful delight. Little John knowingly prompts this delight, and exploits it, building castles in the air for the sheriff by recounting how generously the king supposedly rewarded the monk for bringing news of Robin's capture. The apparent exercise of law is revealed as violent self-gratification.

How far this world has strayed from the very different national community proposed by Geoffrey's Dunwallo is illustrated beautifully by the monk's attack on Robin Hood. Where Dunwallo extended the right of sanctuary from the temples to the cities to the common roads and, through ritualized forgiveness of wrongdoing, brought about a polity of universal peace, the bigheaded monk brings violence into the very church, leading a posse of the sheriff's men to attack Robin while he is at Mass and later boasting to John that he was the first to lay hands on the outlaw. Sanctuary and forgiveness are now to be found neither in sanctuaries themselves nor at the hands of those sworn to holy life, let alone on the roads.

The question remains, then, if there is anywhere in the medieval greenwood we can find a trace of Dunwallo's other nation of peace and roadside forgiveness. Here I would argue that Robin's extreme devotion to Mary, his use of her services as a mobile roadside guarantor for Sir Richard's loan, his refusal to attack any band that a woman was in, invokes her as a model of a highwaywoman of mercy – a living enforcer of Dunwallo's idea that the sacredness of temples could extend through cities and to the roads of the realms. The Virgin sets Robin Hood and his men an extreme example of how various institutions of justice can be usefully flouted in the service of universal mercy, forgiveness and peace.³³ Many of the popularly circulating miracles of the Virgin involve her in tactical roadside intercessions – probably because her roadside shrines extended the length and breadth of Britain. Most famously, when a knight on the way to a tournament stopped to pray at a roadside

chapel and became so caught up in his devotions he forgot the time, Mary took his shape, fought in his place and won the tournament for him, as he found to his astonishment when he arrived late at the grounds and was universally congratulated. A robber who habitually prayed to the Virgin whenever he was going out to rob people was captured and condemned to hang; Mary personally held him up on the roadside gibbet for three days until the miracle was apparent, and thus gained his pardon.³⁴ Jacobus de Voragine's widely circulating *Golden Legend* includes several famous tales of Mary as merciful highwaywoman.³⁵

The Robin Hood of these ballads, then, inscribes himself very advisedly within this tradition of Marian intercession, but neither pretends to nor achieves a similar intercessory transformation. He does not live on Dunwallo's sanctuary-based highway system, but rather on Belinus's punitive one, and he behaves accordingly. Yet nonetheless, I believe the ballads profit from the idea of road as site of disguising, appropriation and redirection that characterizes these miracles of the Virgin. Robin does not try to make people lead better lives; he wants to test them for inclusion in a nation of fellows – where playful exchange replaces important business, and where strength and skill proven in improvised contests replace dubious rapprochements between predatory institutions. In that he does England a service – for to tear down Belinus's monarchically despotic nation is to posit at least the popular dream of a different, less fearful and threatening nation, worked out in pleasure and violence, individual by individual, estate by estate, to the mutual enrichment of all.³⁶

Notes

- 1 The controversy about the anachronism of this term applied to medieval polities continues. I do not wish to suggest that medieval polities approximate the historically situated formations comprising the modern nation state, which have pre-empted the meaning of this term in recent scholarship invested in strict historical periodization. However, this term was available to medieval writers from Latin and French forms and emerges into English in the fourteenth century. It had a wide semantic range, comprising gestational location, family, kin group and people, more generally. It is fluid, often used in consonance with other terms, and the lability with which it changes from usage to usage suggests that it occupies a place somewhere between the inchoateness of one of Raymond Williams's 'structures of feeling' and an emergent concept (see Raymond Williams, *Marxism and*

Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 121–35). The ‘strange nacioun’ of Chaucer’s *Man of Law’s Tale* (Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edn, ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), I.268) provides a typically ambiguous usage. However, in a useful collection of recent scholarship on medieval English forms of nationalism, Kathy Lavezzo has pointed out that modern popular usages are usually just as indeterminate: ‘Introduction’, in Kathy Lavezzo (ed.), *Imagining a Medieval English Nation*, *Medieval Cultures* 37 (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), pp. vii–xxxiv (p. xvi). In rethinking the concept of nation through medieval texts, many scholars have provocatively challenged claims to its essential modernity made or assumed in studies informed by the assumptions of Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study of its Origins and Background* (New York: Macmillan, 1944) and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn (London and New York: Verso, 1991). It is clear that the idea of *nation* performed powerful social, political and psychical work throughout the period. Medieval writers use it to fantasize both generalized and localized senses of community as cultural imperatives, even and perhaps especially when configured within and against transnational formations such as the church, Christendom and the international cultures of chivalry, holy war and empire. Thorlac Turville-Petre’s study centralizing the late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century romances of the Auchinleck manuscript opened the most recent volley: *England the Nation: Language, Literature and National Identity, 1290–1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). Johan Huizinga and, more recently, Alan Ambrisco, Geraldine Heng, Suzanne Conklin Akbari and Suzanne Yeager analyse how nationalist discourses emerge imaginatively (in both chronicles and romances) from rivalries between Western armies during the Crusades: Johan Huizinga, ‘Patriotism and nationalism in European history’, in *Men and Ideas: History, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance*, trans. James S. Holmes and Hans van Marle (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1959), pp. 97–158; Alan S. Ambrisco, ‘Cannibalism and cultural encounters in *Richard Coeur de Lion*’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 29:3 (1999), 499–538; Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of National Identity, 1290–1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 115–23; Suzanne Conklin Akbari, ‘The hunger for national identity in *Richard Coeur de Lion*’, in Robert Stein and Sandra Prior (eds), *Reading Medieval Culture* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 198–227; Suzanne M. Yeager, *Jerusalem in Medieval Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

- 2 Robert Rouse, ‘Walking (between) the lines: romance as itinerary/map’, in Rhiannon Purdie and Michael Cichon (eds), *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2011), pp. 135–47.

Robert Rouse also thoughtfully traces a 'peace of the road's meme', from early medieval historiography to romance: 'The Peace of the Roads: Authority and Auctoritas in Medieval Romance', in Neil Cartlidge (ed.), *Boundaries in Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 115–28.

- 3 Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. and trans. Michael A. Faletra (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2008), p. 73.
- 4 The association of these symbols with the regional heraldry of England and Scotland postdates Geoffrey by at least a century; I'm not giving Geoffrey any prophetic insight or even positing a connection between the current flag of the United Kingdom and Geoffrey's shapely roadworks. However, the sanctity and authority of two authentically ancient Christian crosses is doing significant work here.
- 5 Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 70.
- 6 'Again, he who looks upon a true friend, looks, as it were upon a sort of image of himself For when men have conceived a longing for this virtue they bend toward it and move closer to it, so that, by familiar association with him whom they have begun to love, they may enjoy his character, equal him in affection, become readier to deserve than to demand his favors, and vie with him in a rivalry of virtue.' (Verum etiam amicum qui intuetur, tamquam exemplar aliquod intuetur sui ... quam qui appetiverunt, applicant sese et propius admovent, ut et usu eius, quem diligere coeperunt, fruuntur et moribus, sintque pares in amore et aequales propensioresque ad bene merendum quam ad reposcendum, atque haec inter eos sit honesta certatio): Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Laelius de amicitia*, in *De senectute, de amicitia, de divinatione*, ed. and trans. William Armistead Falconer (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1923), pp. 103–211 (pp. 132–45).
- 7 The poem's messenger is doubly interesting because he is not a transparent conduit for the nobility; he diverges instructively from the discussion of the herald/messenger as servitor in Edith Rickert's *Chaucer's World*. Rickert describes a herald as a 'confessor of arms' who represents his lord and whose first loyalty is to him, but who must also be available to other lords, ladies and gentlefolk. He is to work as a self-guarding conduit and a keeper of secrets; he should function like a mobile version of one of the poem's border stones – interfacing between jurisdictions. But in this romance we see him in the process of enriching himself. He is very conscious of the nature and cost of his labour and eager to get redress on the way. He shows that the joints that hold the poem's jurisdictions in concord need their own constant oiling and maintenance – and his labour on the nobles' behalf underscores the costs of their desires in terms of horseflesh and his own exhaustion. In sum, he undercuts the ideal world of desire and object. Rickert also includes a herald's oath, which enjoins utter loyalty, discretion and self-sacrifice for gentlefolk in need: Edith Rickert, *Chaucer's World*, ed.

- Clair C. Olson and Martin M. Crow (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), pp. 136–9.
- 8 Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, 'The female body politic and the miscarriage of justice in *Athelston*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 17 (1995), 79–98. See also K. D. Eckert, 'Three types of "messengers" in the Middle English *Athelston*', *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles Notes and Reviews*, 26:4 (2013), 219–25.
 - 9 *Athelston*, in *Four Romances of England: King Horn, Havelok the Dane, Bevis of Hampton, Athelston*, ed. Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake and Eve Salisbury (Kalamazoo: University of Western Michigan, 1999), pp. 341–84.
 - 10 For more narrative Anglo-Saxon resonances see Laura A. Hibbard Loomis, who argued that the poem's eponymous king is based on the tenth-century Anglo-Saxon King Athelstan: *Mediaeval Romance in England* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1960), pp. 143–6.
 - 11 For a useful overall survey of the material culture of medieval roads, see G. T. Salusbury-Jones, *Street Life in Medieval England*, 2nd edn (Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester, and Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1975 [1939]).
 - 12 It retained this status in later surveys. William Camden, in his magisterial early seventeenth-century survey of Britain, still writes how 'William the Conqueror, in order to ensure his possession of Kent, which is accounted the key of England, appointed a constable in Dover castle, making the same person, according to the old Roman custom, guardian of the shore, with its five ports, and styling him Warden of the cinque ports': William Camden, *Camden's Britannia: Kent*, trans. Richard Gough (1789), ed. Gordon J. Copley (London: Hutchinson, 1977), p. 7.
 - 13 For useful maps and commentary on this road and its sites, see J. H. B. Peel, *Along the Roman Roads of Britain* (London: Cassell, 1971); and Henry Littlehales (ed.), *Some Notes on the Road from London to Canterbury in the Middle Ages*, Chaucer Society Publications, Series 2, no. 30 (London: Trübner & Co., 1898).
 - 14 *Four Romances of England*, ed. Herzman, Drake and Salisbury, p. x.
 - 15 Maurice Beresford usefully explores the history of boundary beating at Rogationtide, and the archaeology of boundary markers in England, pointing out their antiquity: 'The boundaries of parishes and townships are among the oldest features marked on any modern Ordnance map. Only the Roman and prehistoric antiquities are older. No medieval building is as old. In English towns, the last two hundred years have seen many transformations of old boundaries when new churches have been built for growing industrial populations, but the rural parish boundaries have suffered very little change', *History on the Ground*, rev. edn (Stroud: Sutton, 1984), pp. 26–62 (p. 27).
 - 16 Beresford, *History on the Ground*, pp. 28–9.

- 17 The need for five subsidiary ports and a host of even smaller ones along the south-east English coast – so different from the single one major one at Calais across the channel – stemmed from the shifting and treacherous nature of the channel coast, where changing winds and adverse seas could very quickly render one or another of the south-east ports unreachable. Having five choices of harbour, each connecting to the inland city of Canterbury, at once safeguarded trade and enlarged Canterbury's importance, not only as the centre of the southern English church but also as a crucial trading centre for the collection and distribution of goods, armies and information.
- 18 Dickerson A. Inskip, 'The subplot of the messenger in *Athelston*', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 12 (1976), 115–24.
- 19 Rowe, 'The female body politic'.
- 20 Gordon Hall Gerrould, 'Social and historical reminiscences in the Middle English *Athelston*', *Englische Studien*, 36 (1906), 193–208.
- 21 *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*, ed. Stephen Knight and Thomas Ohlgren, 2nd edn (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000).
- 22 J. C. Holt, *Robin Hood*, rev. edn (London: Thames & Hudson, 1989), pp. 85–6.
- 23 *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*.
- 24 Holt, *Robin Hood*, pp. 83–4; Joseph Hunter, 'Robin Hood', in Stephen Knight (ed.), *Robin Hood: An Anthology of Scholarship and Criticism* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1999), pp. 187–95; R. B. Dobson and J. Taylor, *Rymes of Robin Hood: An Introduction to the English Outlaw* (Stroud and Wolfeboro Falls: Sutton, 1997), pp. 22–3; John Scattergood, 'On the Road: Langland and Some Medieval Outlaw Stories', in John A. Burrow and Hoyt N. Duggan (eds), *Medieval Alliterative Poetry: Essays in Honour of Thorlac Turville-Petre* (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2010), pp. 195–211.
- 25 Dobson and Taylor, *Rymes of Robin Hood*, pp. 22–3.
- 26 Dobson and Taylor, *Rymes of Robin Hood*, pp. 22–3. Joseph Hunter, *The Great Hero of the Ancient Minstrelsy of English, 'Robin Hood': His Period, Real Character, etc. Investigated and Perhaps Ascertained* (1852) (Worksop: Robert White, 1883).
- 27 Hunter, *The Great Hero*, pp. 19–20; Dobson and Taylor, *Rymes of Robin Hood*, p. 24, n. 3.
- 28 The thirteenth-century branch of Watling Street joining Pontefract and Doncaster ran a little west of the fourteenth-century road which carried the name – the new branch was built because it ran along better terrain, a magnesian limestone escarpment: Holt, *Robin Hood*, pp. 84–5.
- 29 A broken bridge also signifies in the longue durée of English public roadworks and who took responsibility for them, betokening a breakdown in central or local administration: 'One of the surprising things about bridges in particular is that they seem very seldom to

have been constructed as entrepreneurial ventures, where tolls were levied by the bridge owner for his / her profit, but from the start were seemingly intended for the “public” good, whether initiated at the state or community level. This more public-oriented or nationally oriented perception of bridges started early, going back as early as the 8th century, as kings like Aethelbald of Mercia saw them as key defensive structures ... After the Norman Conquest of 1066, bridge-work gradually became less of a part of national strategy and more dependent upon the communities, mostly towns, where the bridges lay, or, if in the countryside, upon the holders of land adjacent to those bridges. Since those responsible for bridge-work and also road maintenance were often reluctant participants, such duties were frequently neglected, to be countered by often very haphazard reinforcement at the central, regional or local level attempting to keep bridges and roads functioning as they should’, John Langdon and Jordan Claridge, ‘Transport in medieval England’, *History Compass*, 9:11 (2011), 864–75.

- 30 William Shakespeare, *Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), p. 732.
- 31 The ballad stresses that Robin Hood has different local reputations depending on who is asked. Richard at the Lee has heard good of him, while, not surprisingly, monks, churchmen and sheriffs don’t think much of him.
- 32 *Gest*, lines 1705–12.
- 33 See Henry Adam’s provocative reading of the Virgin as intercessory wildcard: Henry Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1919), pp. 258–61.
- 34 Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel*, pp. 285–6.
- 35 See the exempla of the prayerful highwayman (Annunciation, vol. 1, no. 51), the philandering monk (Assumption, vol. 2, no. 119) and the poor soldier (Assumption, vol. 2, no. 119) in Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
- 36 The small-scale violent mimicry of Robin Hood’s imagined nation, worked out in improvised contests from below, seems to offer more participatory delight to a wider range of constituents than Belinus’s monstrous imperial blitzkrieg, even if its fundamental mechanisms are ultimately similar. L. O. Aranye Fradenburg illuminates constructions of nationhood as circuits of pleasure in ‘Pro Patria Mori’, in Lavezzo (ed.), *Imagining a Medieval English Nation*, pp. 3–38.

London: the hub of an English river transport network, 1250–1550

Claire A. Martin

The River Thames was at the heart of the transport infrastructure that kept the capital and its population supplied with both necessities and luxuries. It was vital to the life and commerce of the medieval city.¹ Its connection to the sea and the trading networks of the continent brought a variety of commodities into and out of London, while the navigable stretches of the Thames, upstream from the city, enabled vital goods such as grain and wood to be conveyed quickly and cheaply along its route. In addition, public passenger services were operated on the river and these were used extensively by all levels of society. Gravesend, Westminster and Southwark were well-travelled routes, and boats also served locations both more obscure and much farther away. In June 1322, for example, John de Thorpe, upholder (a dealer in small goods), and his wife Agnes took a boat as far as Kingston, although they only made it to Putney before meeting with an accident.² London's wealthier residents also made use of the convenience of river transportation. The abbot of Faversham, for example, had a wharf at Bridewell on the Fleet, adjacent to his inn. From here, boats could carry his heavy luggage across the Thames, thus enabling him to avoid the crowds and congestion on the narrow streets and on the bridge when travelling between Kent and his London residence.³ It is clear that the study of the transportation of both goods and people to and from the capital by river inevitably includes the study of transportation from and through a large part of England. As well as demonstrating the importance of river transportation to London, and the way in which the Thames helped shape the city, this chapter will also consider various questions about the development and operation of the trade. Questions such as the extent to which the mayor and aldermen attempted to control and regulate the industry; the identity and unity of the transport operators themselves and whether they were organized into anything approaching a

trade guild; and the impact of changes over the period, particularly the early sixteenth-century increase in population.

River transportation was of particular significance to London because the capital lay at the centre of a network of navigable rivers (see [Figure 11.1](#)). While the Thames was, of course, the main highway for water transportation into and out of the city, it was not the only river navigable by small craft. Even quite minor rivers were used as a means of reaching the villages around London, providing these communities with an efficient and cheap way of accessing the markets and services of the capital. In 1367, John Farnham, clerk, of North Wokynghdone, which is probably modern-day North Ockendon in Thurrock, Essex, boarded a boat at St Botolph's wharf in order to travel home. The boat belonged to 'John Sevar of Portsoken of the parish of Alvenithele' or Aveley, also in Thurrock, so the intended route was probably via a small rivulet, now known as Mar Dyke, which passes both locations and flows into the Thames near Purfleet.⁴ That such streams were navigable and used for everyday journeys demonstrates the wide-ranging importance of waterborne transport at this time.

The River Fleet was also extensively used in the early medieval period but keeping it free for the movement of shipping was apparently not without difficulty. The sixteenth-century antiquarian John Stow records that in 1307, Henry Lacy, Earl of Lincoln complained that:

[W]hereas in times past the course of water running at London under Oldbourne Bridge and Fleet Bridge into the Thames, had been of such breadth and depth, that ten or twelve ships' navies at once, with merchandise, were wont to come to the foresaid bridge of Fleet and some of them to Oldbourne Bridge: now the same course, by filth of the tanners and such others, was sore decayed; also by raising of wharfs; but especially by a diversion of the water made by them of the new Temple for their mills standing without Baynard's Castle ... so as the said ships could not enter as they were wont.⁵

Lacy requested that the mayor, aldermen and sheriffs remedy the problem. Stow also notes that a clearance was undertaken and the mills removed, but that the river was never restored to the same depth and usefulness.⁶ The obstruction of the Fleet continued to be a problem either because of general accumulations of rubbish and silt or because of trade activities. In 1419, it was refuse from the rush boats that caused a problem but, prior to that, the butchers were held to be at fault for polluting the river with entrails and other waste from their trade.⁷

There was no public landing place on the Fleet and the wharves were privately owned, but this did not necessarily diminish the

importance of the river as others were able to unload on payment of a fee. The warden of the Fleet Prison, for example, was able to charge a toll to those who docked at the wharf belonging to the prison, and St Bartholomew's Priory must have landed their goods at this wharf as they held an exemption from paying an unspecified toll to the warden on the goods landed for the house. Since the warden of the Fleet Prison was responsible for maintaining the structure of Fleet Bridge, these tolls may have gone to fund bridge repairs in the same way that money was collected from carters to finance repair of the streets.⁸ Commercial transportation on the Fleet was also important for the supply of rushes; the offloading of corn, beans and hay for St Paul's; and the delivery of wine and other goods for the Fleet Prison. Firewood, oysters, herrings and other victuals were also brought this way, as were paving stones, and goods could be sold directly from the boats as demonstrated by a court case concerning one John Oubrey, which records the sale of paving stones at Fleet Bridge.⁹ The origin of the name of Seacoal Lane probably indicates that this commodity – sea coal from the Tyne – was landed here.¹⁰

As well as the Fleet, the River Lea was also navigable and there is evidence that as early as the twelfth century it was used for the carriage of agricultural produce from Hertfordshire to London. Grain from the Hertfordshire estates of the Priory of Holy Trinity, London was certainly transported along this route before 1207 because, about that year, the priory received from the Countess of Leicester the privilege of paying only the toll that her father had imposed in earlier times when transporting grain through Ware on the River Lea.¹¹ The use of rivers such as this for the import of various commodities including grain contributed to the wealth and development of the counties surrounding the capital. The Lea's use for commercial transportation was also demonstrated by a complaint of 1448 in which it was related that '[t]here is in Middlesex a water called the Ley, running from Tottenham to the Thames by which ships and boats have been accustomed from time immemorial to go from the City of London to the said village of Tottenham and elsewhere with various goods'.¹²

This petition alleged that the usefulness of the river for navigation had been damaged by the Bishop of London who had allowed too much water to pass through the sluice at his water mill in Hackney. The use of the Lea as an easy transport route was probably also instrumental in the development of Tottenham itself and influenced the increasing number of Londoners who purchased land there in the first half of the fifteenth century, led in part by butchers such as Henry Cook, looking for animal pasture.¹³ This

group of men may well have been behind the 1448 complaint about the defects in the channel. Stratford was another significant location to the east of the city whose development was influenced by important transport routes. It was at Stratford that the Essex road, which ran from Aldgate through Mile End and Bow, crossed the Lea and here the shipper could choose to continue by river to London Bridge – a distance of eight miles – or transfer to cart for the road journey to Aldgate of three miles.¹⁴ Water transportation would have had the advantage for heavy goods but rapid transit to the capital was probably favoured for lighter and perishable agricultural produce.

In 1430, commissioners were appointed with the power to borrow money in order to remove obstructions from the Lea, as there were so many shelves in the river from Ware to London that boats could not pass along. This is the first known English example of a statutory body borrowing money for public works. The commissioners were permitted to charge 4*d.* for each freighted boat for three years to finance their loan.¹⁵ However, these piecemeal improvements do not seem to have provided a lasting solution and the counties of Middlesex, Essex and Hertfordshire constructed a new cut or navigable canal, which was complete by 1581. This included an early pound lock at Waltham that comprised two sets of gates to allow a boat to be raised and lowered while still maintaining the flow of water. The first of these locks in England was introduced on the Exe in 1566 and the one at Waltham was completed in 1576.¹⁶ Many of the other tributaries of the Thames must also have been useful transport routes although specific evidence of this has not yet come to light.

Jurisdiction and regulation

When the city was appointed Conservator of the River Thames in 1237, its functions included the regulation of shipping and the licensing of boat operators. The mayor and aldermen made no attempt, during this period, to use these powers to develop an organized policy or strategy for transportation but they did occasionally pass isolated regulations that were usually concerned with prices, tolls and taxes or with the maintenance of traditional operational practices. In 1446, for example, Richard Marcheford and Richard Brinktone were granted the ‘passage’ of barges between Billingsgate and Gravesend for twelve years, for an annual payment to the city of £8.¹⁷ Since the boatmen of Gravesend and Milton had the monopoly on actually operating

this service, granted by royal authority, this must mean the right to collect a passage toll, possibly the charge of 6*d.* that was imposed by the city on all boat owners plying this route in 1421.¹⁸ In the same year, there was concern over public safety, tax evasion and internal industry disputes. As a result, the mayor and aldermen ordered that no one be allowed as bargeman, boatman or ferryman or as hosteler (innkeeper) or herberger (lodging house keeper) on or near the Thames unless he be of approved character, 'inasmuch as many evil doers had been accustomed to frequent places near the river and to defraud the king of customs due on their merchandise'; that boats should be properly manned to ensure the safety of the passengers; and that boat owners should not quarrel among themselves over fares but live together peaceably.¹⁹ In 1463, the city authorities created price regulations for the lightermen and occasional orders regarding prices were also issued for the operators of ferry and passenger services, as outlined below.²⁰ This did not, however, prevent royal involvement and there was no concerted effort to regulate the industry, so when concern arose over the fees being demanded by the watermen, it was a parliamentary Act of 1514 which laid down set prices, rather than a city ordinance.²¹ Co-operation from the mayor and sheriffs of London in the enforcement of this was outlined and expected but only as the equivalent authority to the Justices of the Peace in the shires, not as the holders of any special authority over the Thames.

It was by a similar process of parliamentary Act and local implementation, rather than a proactive policy of the city, that the first steps were taken to organize the operation of passenger services in the mid-sixteenth century. In 1555, the watermen gained their first formal organization in an Act of Parliament that included the complaint that there were many watermen operating on the Thames who were only young boys or had little skill and were under no masters or guidance. Many of these men, it was alleged, had avoided being impressed into the navy and, after hiding in the countryside for a time, resorted again to their felonies and robberies with the result that many river passengers had been robbed, had their goods spoiled or had been drowned. Equally, the boats employed were said to be too small and narrow and less substantial and well made than those used twenty years previously.²² Therefore, the mayor and aldermen were authorized to annually elect eight watermen who operated on the river between Gravesend and Windsor to be the 'Overseers and Rulers of all the Whirimen and Watermen' and

to enforce the provisions of the Act, which included the following regulations.²³ Where two people operated one boat together, at least one should have had two years' experience of rowing on the Thames and be certified, under the seal of the overseers and rulers, to be a sufficient and able waterman. No single person, not being a householder, could row commercially on the Thames unless apprenticed to a master or retained as a servant on a yearly contract. The mayor and aldermen and the Justices of the Peace in the shires adjoining the Thames outside London were given authority to investigate any complaints of offences against this Act but also to correct and reform the actions of the overseers and rulers if they were found to have punished any person unjustly. All boats built to carry people on the Thames were to be 22½ feet in length and 4½ feet broad amidships, substantially built and able to carry two people 'on one syde tyght' or else they would be forfeit. Any waterman found, by two independent witnesses, to have hidden himself in order to avoid impressment and then returned to his former trade would be imprisoned for two weeks and banned from rowing on the Thames for a year and a day. The overseers and rulers were authorized to call together all the watermen, certified by them to carry passengers on the Thames, and register their names in a book and also to view all new boats built for passenger use on the river, before they were launched, to ensure that they were built according to these regulations. Any elected overseer or ruler of the watermen who abused his position or refused to accept the appointment would be fined £5. The mayor and aldermen were given authority regularly to review the prices charged by the watermen between different places and to set new fares as necessary. These new fares would need to be ratified by two members of the Privy Council and then they would be posted in the Guildhall, Westminster Hall and in other appropriate places. Those who charged more than the set prices would be fined 40s. for every offence and imprisoned for six months. Finally, nobody who operated a 'western barge' was to take into his service any unmarried people unless they were employed by yearly contract and no householders unless they were willing to answer for their good behaviour. Any breach of this would result in a fine of 40s. for every offence.

Again, the mayor and aldermen were commissioned to enforce rules that they themselves had not introduced but they had no grounds for complaint as they had made no concerted effort to introduce such regulation for themselves. The statute of 1555 did, at least, provide a structured means of governing this industry.

Possibly, because of the diverse nature of their operations and the distinctions made between the watermen who operated passenger services and lightermen who offloaded goods, there appears to have been no demand for a fully fledged trade guild at this point. It was not until 1621 that a campaign was begun against the mayor appointing rulers and overseers, without at least taking the opinion of members into account, but even this took twenty years to have any effect.²⁴

Even less is known of the administrative history of the lightermen before they were joined with the watermen into the Company of Watermen and Lightermen in 1700. They had their own livery company by 1667 but how long it had been in existence is unrecorded.²⁵ It is therefore unsurprising that watermen, lightermen, bargemen and other such professionals do not generally describe themselves as citizens in their wills, whereas mariners and shipwrights do so more frequently.

Goods transportation and the lightermen

Much of the movement of ships and boats within the port of London was related to goods services and trade, and without the river network it would have been very difficult to supply a growing city of the size of London. This river transportation was particularly important for bulky or heavy, relatively low-value goods such as grain. The areas of activity for London cornmongers, for example, was generally confined to within approximately thirty-two kilometres of navigable rivers such as the Thames, Lea and Medway or along the Kent and Essex coast, with waterside centres such as Henley-on-Thames acting as storage and transport depots. This represents a point beyond which it was no longer economically viable to transport grain, even by water, to the London market. The boundary of this area was, however, flexible and would expand when supply was limited and prices were high. The documented pattern of cornmongers' activities fits well with price evidence, which shows that areas located further away from rivers or the sea were characterized by wheat prices too low to suggest regular contact with the London market.²⁶ The establishment of regular routes and permanent depots demonstrates the importance of river transportation to the economic life of the capital and the country beyond. Not only did the river transport network of London have a significant effect on the economic fortunes of a large area, it also helped to shape the framework of the city itself

in that it dictated the locations of markets. The grain that travelled down the Thames to London would have been landed above the bridge at Queenhithe, and the grain brought up the Medway from Kent was landed below the bridge at Billingsgate.²⁷ Both locations therefore became sites of important markets. Grain transported down the River Lea would have probably completed its journey by road and therefore been retailed at one of the inland markets at Gracechurch Street and Newgate. [Figure 11.2](#) shows the hithes and docks on the Thames where different goods were landed.

Both timber and firewood also relied heavily on river transportation. Firewood was largely supplied to London from locally managed woodland in the form of faggots, talwood and billets.²⁸ Manorial accounts show that throughout the fourteenth century faggot production was a specialization of Middlesex, Surrey and Essex and parts of Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Kent, while talwood was produced in northern Kent and the vicinity of the Thames between Henley and Datchet.²⁹ As demonstrated in price regulations from 1350, some talwood, presumably that from the Thames valley, came by road and entered the city via Cripplegate, but most talwood came up the Thames and was landed at Woodwharf in the parish of St Peter the Less or Castle Baynard Dock, both of which were centres for the firewood trade by 1200.³⁰ Timberwharf, as its name suggests, probably dealt more in building timber than firewood but Queenhithe and Dowgate were also sites for the loading and unloading of wood.³¹ At least as early as 1276 faggots were also brought upriver to wharves just below London Bridge; the name Wood Street suggests there was a market in the vicinity.³² Many woodmongers owned not only carts but also boats and shouts (a type of Thames barge) from which they customarily sold firewood directly to citizens.³³ In 1369 John de Potenhale, a woodmonger, left his wife a certain shout and a batell (a small rowing boat) with their apparel, while his other shouts were sold to pay his debts.³⁴ Woodmongers, such as John Ferroure, also stored stocks of wood and faggots on their wharves. In 1381 he had a large pile of faggots and talwood valued at five marks lying beside Pykardislane, a short distance from Queenhithe.³⁵ It was probably such woodmongers who were the focus of complaints in wardmotes or ward meetings about residents blocking the street with piles of logs or timber. William Stalon, for example, was repeatedly indicted between 1473 and 1480 for storing logs and timber in the street in Portsoken ward.³⁶ It is clear the transport network impacted upon the life and structure of the city in a variety of different ways, from



Fig 1.1 Map of the Quays of Medieval London by c.1520

Figure 11.2 Map of the quays of medieval London by c. 1520.

the locations of markets and street names to road obstructions and associated neighbourhood problems.

River transportation was not only valuable for moving heavy, bulky goods but also vital for bringing food to the city. Fish, particularly that caught in the Thames Estuary, was, unsurprisingly, often transported by water. An ordinance of 1364 stipulated that all fish coming to the city by boat was to be discharged either between London Bridge and Billingsgate or between Dibleswharf, to the east of Queenhithe, and Freshfishwharf above the bridge.³⁷ The fish wharf by the bridge served the shops of New Fish Street and the Stocks, while the fish wharf in St Mary Somerset parish served the market in Old Fish Street. The names Old Fish Street and New Fish Street suggest that the fish wharf by the bridge was a later development, but the bridge foot must always have been a convenient landing place.³⁸ Much of the salmon brought to London probably came from Scotland by ship but it completed its journey by road; other fish such as herrings, mackerel, eels and cod were also sometimes brought overland.³⁹ In the second half of the thirteenth century, there were regulations in existence regarding the customs payable by merchants who brought these fish to London specifically by horse or cart.⁴⁰ Road transportation was the practical choice for freshwater fish that may have been caught in rivers that were either unnavigable or not connected to the Thames or its main tributaries. Sea fish and salmon would more logically be brought by coastal craft into the Thames Estuary. There are references to fish being brought as far as Barking, Northfleet or Dartford. Carts would then have been required to transport the produce onwards from there. Numerous other goods were transported into the city either partly or wholly by river. Although much water for the city was brought in via the conduit system, some was transported by boat. From 1350 and 1366 there are references to it being landed at Dowgate and at Castle Baynard, from where the carters, known as 'waterleders', charged 1½*d.* to transport it to Cheapside.⁴¹ Other quays handled lesser or more specialized merchandise.⁴²

Although river transportation was clearly important and extensively used, it was not particularly fast. The rate of travel by water is demonstrated by a letter of 1407 from the king at Windsor to the Privy Council, stating that Henry IV had hurt his leg and would travel by water to London because his physicians would not let him ride. He hoped to be at Staines that night and would take a boat to the city, expecting to arrive there in three or four days.⁴³ In 1502 royal expenses included a great boat and five rowers for two days to

go from Hampton Court to London.⁴⁴ The probable stages of the journey upriver from London would therefore appear to be: the city or Westminster to Putney, Putney to Hampton Court, and Hampton Court to Staines or Windsor, with each stage representing one day of travel. This would make the journey only slightly faster than walking pace. There is some evidence of this from the Stonor letters. On Thursday 9 May 1476, Goddoard Oxbryge in London wrote to William Stonor that he had delivered to William Somer, bargeman, various goods to carry to Henley. He states that the barge left the city at noon and was expected to arrive on Monday or Tuesday at the latest. This would approximately comply with the stages above, leaving one or two days to complete the rest of the journey from Windsor to Henley.⁴⁵ There was further correspondence about goods sent by the barge of William Somer in 1478 and that of John Somer in 1482 but in two cases no reference was made to the expected time of arrival, and in the final case, although the barge was expected to arrive on Sunday or Monday, we do not know when it left. From a letter dated Saturday 11 May, it is clear that it had already left but whether that was earlier the same day or several days previously is uncertain.⁴⁶ Travel from the city in the other direction, to Gravesend, would take between three and four hours. A description of the start of the journey of Wolsey to the Emperor Maximilian in 1506 notes that he arrived in London around four in the afternoon when the ferry to Gravesend was ready to launch. 'With a prosperous tyde and winde', he arrived at Gravesend in a little over three hours which, it would seem, was regarded as making good speed.⁴⁷

The comparative costs of carriage by road or water are one way of demonstrating the importance of river transport. In 1351, for example, the accounts for building work carried out at Windsor Castle record a payment of 6s. 8*d.* for the carriage of a bell across the city from Aldgate to Baynard's Castle. The onward journey by boat, over a much greater distance, from Baynard's Castle to Windsor, cost only 4s.⁴⁸ James Masschaele has similarly found that in the early fourteenth century, the cost of land transportation was, on average, twice as much as transportation by river: 1.5*d.* per ton-mile as opposed to 0.7*d.* per ton-mile.⁴⁹ Around London, however, even the price of 4s. was expensive compared to the cost of river transportation for goods of a more mundane nature than bells.

In 1389 the king's butler paid 3*d.* per tun for transportation of wine, by lighter, from the Vintry to 'la Pole', 3½*d.* per tun from the Vintry to Ratcliff and 4*d.* per tun from London to Greenwich.⁵⁰

Table 11.1 Commercial transport rates, 2 May 1463.⁵¹

Transport to the city	Per tonne tight		Per last or two tonne tight	
	Strangers	Freemen	Strangers	Freemen
from the pole (the pool in the River Thames beside the Tower of London? ⁵²)	3 <i>d.</i>	2 <i>d.</i>	6 <i>d.</i>	4 <i>d.</i>
from Radcliff (Ratcliffe Wharf, in the parish of Stepney)	3 <i>d.</i>	2 <i>d.</i>	6 <i>d.</i>	4 <i>d.</i>
from Blackwell	4 <i>d.</i>	3 <i>d.</i>	8 <i>d.</i>	6 <i>d.</i>
from Woolwich	6 <i>d.</i>	4 <i>d.</i>	12 <i>d.</i>	8 <i>d.</i>
from Greenwich	8 <i>d.</i>	6 <i>d.</i>	16 <i>d.</i>	12 <i>d.</i>

These statistics can be compared with the earliest surviving official price regulations for the lightermen, introduced by the Common Council on 2 May 1463, from which it is clear that the king’s official paid slightly more over the shorter distances but enjoyed a preferential rate for the longer journeys (Table 11.1). The prices laid down in these regulations favour the freemen of London with cheaper rates and the places detailed also reveal the destinations and commercial depots in the immediate hinterland to the east of the city. That such a regular structure of staging posts and commercial landing stages was in existence further confirms the importance of river transportation and its extensive use and demonstrates the reach and influence of London beyond its own administrative boundaries.

These regulations are also significant because this was the only significant ordinance passed by the mayor and aldermen with regard to goods transportation in this period. The city authorities do not seem to have been particularly concerned to organize or control the industry as long as prices remained reasonable for the benefit of citizens. This ordinance was presumably passed because there was some concern about the prices being charged by boat operators and the timing suggests this may have been related to the beginning of population growth and increase in demand. The

surviving accounts of the wardens of London Bridge and various city churches can be used to shed some light on the reality of river transport prices. In 1472/3, for example, the Bridge House did indeed pay 8*d.* for the transportation of sixty loads of elms from Woolwich to London.⁵³ This would suggest the regulations were effective but there are difficulties with the available evidence. It has not been possible to find a series of payments that can be compared to the prices outlined in 1463 because most entries are for transportation from locations other than the small number of places listed in the ordinance. In addition, entries in accounts are almost always ambiguous. In 1504/5, for example, St Mary at Hill paid 2*s.* 8*d.* 'for bryngyng of borde and polys from kyngston': an unspecified quantity of goods in an unknown number of boats.⁵⁴ Not only is the volume or weight of goods usually impossible to quantify, but also the sizes of boats operating on the Thames were so disparate that the concept of a boat full of goods is meaningless, or at least comparisons cannot realistically be made. This would also have been a problem for medieval traders and boat operators. It would seem that the solution, at least for timber, was to charge according to the number of cartloads that went into and came out of the boat, presumably on the basis that the weight of goods in a cart was less variable. The accounts of St Michael Cornhill readily illustrate this. In 1551 £3 was paid to William Chamberlain 'for bryngyng up of a barge of tymber from Harry Hawthorne the carpenter' who was located in Westminster, and wharfage was paid for thirty loads of timber out of the same barge. This would equate to a cost of 2*s.* to move one cartload of timber by water from Westminster to the city. In 1551 the number of loads in the barge is actually specified and seven loads of timber are freighted by barge for 2*s.* 4*d.* per load – a not dissimilar figure. In this case, from where they were freighted is not mentioned but since most of the timber for the church seems at this period to have been coming from Hawthorne the carpenter, it seems likely the origin was again Westminster. This analysis is thrown into uncertainty, however, by the payment in 1551 of £5 13*s.* 4*d.* for a barge of timber from Hawthorne but the payment of wharfage for only twenty-four loads, which of course equates to a much higher carriage cost.⁵⁵

The accounts of the Bridge House do, however, contain a consistent series of payments for the water freightage of timber from suppliers in Kingston and Windsor. Between 1392 and 1398 numerous payments were made for the carriage by river of timber

from Kingston to the city. The cost per cartload varied between 9*d.* and 12*d.*, with no obvious explanation.⁵⁶ In this sample, larger volumes of goods did not necessarily mean cheaper rates and, since the names of the carriers are not generally given, it is impossible to know if certain operators were more expensive than others or to what extent the quality of the timber varied. In the fifteenth century the wardens of the Bridge House were regularly sourcing timber from the Windsor area and in this case seem to have arranged very favourable rates. In 1466/7 they paid 15*d.* per load for thirty-seven loads of elms from Boveney near Windsor and 14*d.* per load for nine loads of elms from Datchet.⁵⁷ In 1472/3 eighty loads of elms from Staines cost 11*d.* per load and in 1512/3 fifty-one loads and eleven foot of timber transported from Eton Bridge to Southwark cost 16*d.* per load.⁵⁸ There are clearly unknown factors involved in the calculation of price.

The accounts also include a series of payments for road haulage of timber from Croydon and, using this data, it is possible to make a direct comparison of the cost of road versus river transportation. If an average price per load for the carriage of timber from Kingston to the city is taken to be 10½*d.* and the distance is approximately thirteen miles, this equates to a cost per mile of 0.81*d.* Similarly, an average price per load of 13½*d.* from Windsor, over a distance of twenty-eight miles, produces an average cost per load, per mile of 0.48*d.* Between 1396 and 1513 the wardens of the Bridge House commonly paid 20*d.* per load for the carriage by cart of timber from Croydon to the city.⁵⁹ Over a distance of eleven miles this equates to a cost per load, per mile of 1.81*d.* Two things are apparent here: firstly that even by river, transportation over longer distances is more economical than shorter journeys; secondly and more importantly, the movement of timber by cart is more than twice as expensive as carriage than by boat. This corresponds with Masschaele's findings and again highlights the importance of river transportation in ensuring that the supply of goods to London was economically viable.

It is also noticeable how often the transportation of various goods from London to Westminster, even when amounts or size of boat are unknown, incurs a charge of approximately 8*d.* This again demonstrates that although it is still considerably cheaper than land carriage, transportation by river was more economical over longer distances. In 1352 numerous loads of glass of differing sizes were transported by river from London to Westminster and then onwards to supply the glaziers who were manufacturing

windows for the glazing of the chapter house and chapel windows at Windsor Castle. In several cases, although not all, the cost of this river journey was 8*d.*⁶⁰ The Crown, probably by means of purveyance, could benefit from special services at much reduced rates, so on 26 September 1322 the treasure of the Crown, in the form of fifty-two barrels of coins, each containing £500, was moved from the treasury at Westminster to the Tower of London. The transfer from the Queen's Bridge on the river at Westminster to the water's edge at the Tower took place in two barges and four boats at the cost of 2*s.* 9*d.*⁶¹ This is considerably less than the 4*s.* paid to move the bell to Windsor in 1351 but costs of handling would also have affected price. Although timber, coins and a bell are all similarly heavy, timber can be handled with less care and coins in barrels can be rolled easily. The movement of a heavy and valuable bell would have been considerably more awkward and would probably have required greater manpower.

Passenger transport and the watermen

While the economical movement of goods by river was vital to the supply and development of London, water transportation was also an important means of passenger transit. The existence of regular medieval ferries may even be considered the earliest form of public transport. The route between Gravesend and the city was particularly significant for a number of reasons. It was often the final destination of long-distance, coastal and seagoing craft and any passengers on board such vessels would have transferred here to the smaller boats in which they would enter the pool of London, but it was also one of the earliest ferry routes. While small shouts, wherries and other boats were available for hire as taxis to whatever destination was desired, there were also services that ran at regular times along a certain route. Two of the oldest were the Short Ferry, which ran from Gravesend directly across the river to the north bank in Essex, and the Long Ferry, which ran between Gravesend and Billingsgate. The earliest reference to the Long Ferry comes from 1293, when a jury presented to the justices of assize that the boatmen of Gravesend and nearby Milton and London were taking 1*d.* from passengers for their fares where they had previously charged only ½*d.*, which the boatmen themselves did not deny.⁶² In 1313 the overcharging by the Gravesend ferrymen was again brought to light in the assizes of this year where it was found that they had reverted to taking 1*d.*

per passenger.⁶³ In 1377 the town of Gravesend suffered damage from a French raid and following a petition from the abbot of St Mary Graces, the king, in 1379, confirmed the exclusive privilege enjoyed by the boatmen of Gravesend and Milton of conveying passengers between there and London.⁶⁴ The rates allowed were 2*d.* per person and 4*s.* for the whole boat.⁶⁵ It is unclear whether this represents an increase in the charge in order to fund repairs. The customs of Billingsgate, compiled from thirteenth- and fourteenth-century ordinances and inserted into Letter Book G in 1361, include the regulation that the operators of the ferry between Billingsgate and Gravesend should charge no more than 2*d.* per person, but this does appear at the bottom of the folio as a separate item and could have been added after the royal grant of 1379.⁶⁶ The price of 2*d.* per passenger was still being enforced by the city authorities in 1421, and was stipulated as part of the ordinance, introduced in that year, regulating the Thames boat operators.⁶⁷ The operation of this ferry did, however, become one of the privileges that were routinely confirmed to the Gravesend and Milton boatmen at the accession of each new monarch. In 1401 the intrusion of London boatmen into this exclusive and presumably profitable right was specifically outlined and condemned by the grant of Henry IV.⁶⁸

Equally as ancient, the Short Ferry originally ran across the Thames from Higham in Kent. One of the earliest references occurs in 1293, when a complaint was made about boatmen of the prioress of Higham who were taking 2*d.* from every horseman and 1*d.* from every foot passenger. They were ordered to take only 1*d.* and ½*d.* respectively.⁶⁹ The priory at Higham maintained the bridge and causeway leading across the marshes to the ferry dock and also seems to have provided the boat, as in 1474 the prioress hired a replacement boat from Rochester.⁷⁰ By 1547, however, Gravesend, which as has been demonstrated was a transport hub for several routes, had superseded Higham as the south Thames ferry hub and the Short Ferry had been moved to operate between there and Tilbury Fort on the north bank, which had been built by Henry VIII for the defence of the Essex marshes.⁷¹ There were, of course, other ferries below London Bridge but closer to the city. The record of the probate of a Peter atte Ferry of Stepney survives from 1409 and although the location of this ferry is unknown, it may have been that which was also mentioned in the will of Elizabeth Holden proved in 1450. She bequeathed a part share in a ferry associated with Pomfret manor in Stepney Marsh, modern day Milwall, which

plied between Pomfret and Greenwich.⁷² The earliest record of a ferry operating between the north and south banks at Woolwich comes from 1308, when William de Wicton, waterman, who operated the ferry at that time, sold his house and business to William Atte Hall, mason, for £10.⁷³ Further downstream, there was also a ferry associated with either the abbey of Lesnes or the manor of Erith. In 1286/7 a valuation of the rights and properties of the abbey included 'the passage of the water', but in 1326/7 David de Strabolgie, son of John, Earl of Athol, died possessed of the manor of Erith, which also included the right of passage there across the Thames.⁷⁴ In 1437 regulations were introduced on the prices of private hire *ultra aquam* or 'across the water', which presumably meant from north bank to south bank or vice versa. It was ordered that the boatman should take no more than $\frac{1}{2}d.$ for a boat with up to three people in it and $1d.$ for a greater number of passengers.⁷⁵ There was also a ferry service to Putney; it seems highly probable that there were similar ferry services to Westminster and other locations. The royal wardrobe accounts for 1300 include the payment of $3s. 6d.$ to Robert the ferryman of Putney for conveying the king and royal family to Westminster, and $4s.$ to the same Robert for ferrying the family and household of the king to Fulham, on two days, in two barges.⁷⁶ The existence of such established ferry routes and services suggests sophisticated and frequent use of river transportation by the population of London and the surrounding countryside. River boat operators provided a form of public service transport which was not cheaply and easily available on land.

As well as ferry services which operated over specified routes, it was also possible to hire small boats in order to make a particular journey. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the mayor and aldermen passed occasional regulations regarding the prices to be charged by the boat operators. In 1372 it was proclaimed that no boatman should charge more than $2d.$ for the hire of his boat between London and Westminster and no more than $3d.$ when the boat was full. It was made clear that any boat owner exceeding these charges would be in danger of imprisonment by the authorities both in the city and in Westminster. In the same way any boatman who refused hire under these terms could also face incarceration.⁷⁷ It would appear that these prices were still in force in 1437, when it was stated that the journey to Westminster with one man and one horse and pack should cost $1d.$, two to four men and packhorses should cost $2d.$ and any number above that $3d.$ ⁷⁸ From this it is clear that the price charged depended upon how many passengers were in the boat.

Table 11.2 The rates charged for passenger transport on the river in 1514.⁷⁹

	To hire a whole barge, boat or wherry	Per person	Minimum capacity⁸⁰
To or from Gravesend by barge	3s.	2d.	18
To or from Gravesend by wherry	2s.	—	—
To or from Erith, Greenhithe, Purfleet or 'Graistorrok'	12d.	1d.	12
To or from Woolwich	8d.	½d.	16
To or from Greenwich	4d.	½d.	8
Between London Bridge, the Old Swan, the Crane in the Vintry, Paul's Wharf or St Mary Overy and Westminster or Lambeth	3d.	½d.	6
Between Blackfriars, Bridewell or the Temple and Westminster or Lambeth	2d.	½d.	4
Westminster to Lambeth or Stangate to Westminster or any of the said places across the river	½d.	—	—
To or from Mortlake	12d.	2d.	6

It would seem from these regulations that prices remained fairly steady until the early sixteenth century when growth in population caused instability. Although the previous two centuries had seen the mayor and alderman introduce more regulations for passenger transport than for goods transport, their lack of action when problems arose meant it was parliament that stepped in to deal with the difficulties. A parliamentary Act of 1514 outlined prices that were said to be longstanding rates no longer being observed by the watermen (see Table 11.2). Instead, it was related, their demands for higher prices had led to much inconvenience and argument. Those who operated passenger boats on the Thames were therefore

ordered to observe the rates outlined in the Act and any waterman refusing to carry passengers at these rates was at risk of being fined three times the value of the fare that he refused.

There is indeed a strong correlation between the rates outlined in this Act and those that we know were in force a hundred years or more previously. Hire of a boat to Westminster still cost between 2*d.* and 3*d.* as laid down in 1372 and 1437, and passage to Gravesend 2*d.* per person, as it had in 1379. Was it true, however, as stated in the preamble to these regulations, that these prices were not being observed? If so, it would seem that in this case, parliament, with the support of the city, was following a policy of trying to hold back price inflation, which was possibly caused by the population and the demand for services growing faster than the numbers of boats and boatmen on the river. Price regulation was something that the mayor and aldermen were familiar with, not only within the transport industry but also with regard to many other trades and occupations. The statute also makes it clear that the boat operators were not compelled to go until the number of people in the boat and their total fare was the same as that payable for hiring the whole boat. This would have helped to protect them from any loss of income caused by being forced to take half-empty boats at a lower rate.

Because of a lack of detail in the evidence available it is difficult to trace whether these price structures were adhered to or, as claimed in the statute, whether the watermen had previously increased prices. Where payments for boat hire occur in churchwardens' accounts and other sources, they often do not include full details, such as how many people were travelling or whether the journey was a return trip, and are often listed with other expenses such as 'breakfast in Westminster' or other charges. No evidence is forthcoming for travel to Gravesend, but in the accounts for 1509/10 the churchwardens of St Mary at Hill paid 5*d.* for boat hire for John Althorpe and Nicholas Betnaham to Greenwich.⁸¹ In the accounts for 1457/8 All Hallows London Wall paid 3½*d.* for boat hire to Lambeth and in 1498/9 the churchwardens of St Dunstan in the East paid 5*d.* for two men to make a return journey to the same place.⁸² This latter payment suggests that a one-way trip per person cost 1¼*d.*, if indeed a ferry-style service was operating and charging in this manner. This would in turn indicate that in the case of All Hallows London Wall either only one person made the journey or the trip was taken in only one direction. This limited sample would certainly appear to suggest that prior to the regulations of 1514 the watermen were indeed charging significantly

higher fees than those laid down in the statute. This assumes, however, that the churchwardens paid per person rather than hiring the whole boat. If they had decided to hire the whole boat to their own use, the prices they paid are much closer to those in the regulations.

Considerably more data are available for the hire of boats to Westminster because of the frequency with which this journey must have been undertaken, but the evidence is hardly more conclusive. In 1493/4 St Mary at Hill paid 8*d.* for boat hire to Westminster but this sum included unspecified additional expenses.⁸³ In 1504/5 St Mary's paid 4½*d.* and in 1508–10 All Hallows London Wall paid 4*d.* for the transportation by boat of two men to Westminster, but in the latter case this also included the cost of breakfast.⁸⁴ While these are not specifically stated to be return trips, in 1539/40 a journey by boat there and back again cost 7*d.*⁸⁵ Ten years later, St Michael Cornhill did indeed pay the sum of 2*d.* for boat hire to Westminster, although the number of passengers was not specified.⁸⁶ Again these rates are broadly in line with those laid down in the Act of 1514 for the hire of a whole boat and it would therefore seem that this was what the churchwardens of London routinely chose to do. The evidence from churchwardens' accounts therefore appears to suggest that prior to the Act of 1514, and probably afterwards, the rates charged were not too far away from those laid down. If there had been some complaint of overcharging to prompt the issue of price regulations, it would appear to have been fairly limited or at least does not show significantly in the available evidence. It is possible that any increase in price was targeted at those who paid individually, rather than those with the means to hire their own boat. It must be stressed, however, that without a larger body of data that specifies not only whether the journey was return but also how many people travelled and whether they paid individually or for the whole boat, any conclusions can only be tentative.

Conclusion

The existence of established routes for the movement of commercial goods, using locations such as Henley or Stratford as storage depots and local transport interchanges, demonstrates the importance of waterborne freight to the economic life of London and England. Rural areas that had access to the capital by river enjoyed many advantages over rival, landlocked centres and thus the development of certain areas can be linked to river transport. Years that saw abnormally high grain prices resulted in an extension of the

area supplying corn to the capital into more distant coastal areas of Suffolk, Norfolk and beyond, rather than the landlocked area to the north and west of Oxford.⁸⁷ This clearly reflects the cost advantages enjoyed by water transport in the movement of heavy, bulky goods over long distances.⁸⁸

Of all forms of transportation that were so vital to the operation of the medieval city, river transport comes closest to the concept of mass public transit. Boats could be hired for private use and for the movement of goods in the same way that horses and carts could be hired, but the existence from an early date of ferry services with fare schedules was something different. There was no comparable land service until the arrival of the mail coaches and stagecoaches in the seventeenth century. If river transport provision was rather more sophisticated it was not, however, the result of any more developed transport policy adopted by the City. The activities of the mayor and aldermen were largely confined to occasional regulation of operational practice and prices that seems to have been intended to maintain traditional forms rather than institute innovative improvements.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, further change was brought upon the industry prompted by population growth. An ever larger number of people would have made greater demands on river services, so pushing up prices. And an influx into the industry of inexperienced, rootless men hoping to take advantage of the situation resulted in accidents and public concerns about safety and security. It was parliament, however, rather than the mayor and aldermen, which was deemed to be the appropriate authority to deal with this by the Act of 1555. This was the first concerted effort to formalize the running of the industry, introduce some sort of standards and regularize training. It did not, however, aim at establishing any form of self-government or guild, probably because there seems to have been no such demand. While the lighters used to unload ships had to be operated by freemen, these were not the only river boat services, and many of those who used boats in the city may not actually have lived in London. The watermen, therefore, probably lacked a sense of unity, local community and even interest in the city itself. They apparently felt no pressure to group together in order to protect their livelihoods or their industry. Relatively unregulated before 1555 and with a rising population to provide sufficient work for all, they probably saw no reason to do so. Nevertheless, they were part of a vital transport network that was important in the development and success not only of London and its immediate hinterland but also of those producing salmon in Scotland and tin in Cornwall.

Notes

- 1 On the evolution of London as a port in the Middle Ages, and on the importance of the Thames in that evolution, see Gustav Milne, *The Port of Medieval London* (Stroud: Tempus, 2003). On the physical background of waterways before 1350 and in the upper Thames, see John Blair, 'Transport and canal-building on the upper Thames, 1000–1300', in John Blair (ed.), *Waterways and Canal-Building in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 254–86. For a concise overview of recent scholarship on medieval English travel by water, see John Langdon and Jordan Claridge, 'Transport in medieval England', *History Compass*, 9:11 (2011), 864–75 (864–8).
- 2 *Calendar of Coroner's Rolls of the City of London A.D. 1300–1378*, ed. Reginald R. Sharpe (London: Richard Clay & Sons, 1913), p. 58.
- 3 Nicholas Barton, *The Lost Rivers of London: A Study of their Effects upon London and Londoners, and the Effects of London and Londoners upon Them* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1962; repub. Historical Publications, 1992), pp. 74–5.
- 4 *Calendar of Coroner's Rolls*, pp. 272–3.
- 5 Lacy had purchased in 1285–6 the whole site of the Blackfriars first house and in 1332 and 1349 held property in the same area from the Fleet Prison: Marjorie B. Honeybourne, 'The Fleet and its neighbourhood in early and medieval times', *London Topographical Record*, 19 (1947), 13–87 (34).
- 6 C. Given-Wilson et al. (ed.), 'PROME': *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England 1275–1504*, 16 vols (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), vol. 2, pp. 490–1; John Stow, *Annales, or A General Chronicle of England*, 2 vols (London: Richard Meighen, 1631), vol. 1, p. 13.
- 7 *Calendar of Letter Books of the City of London: Letter Books A–L*, ed. Reginald R. Sharpe, 11 vols (London: Corporation of London, 1899–1912), vol. F, p. 84; vol. G, pp. xxvii–viii, 31–2, 43; vol. H, pp. 301, 392; Caroline M. Barron, 'The quarrel of Richard II with London, 1392–97', in F. R. H. Du Boulay and C. M. Barron (eds), *The Reign of Richard II* (London: Athlone Press, 1971), pp. 173–201 (pp. 175–6); *Memorials of London and London Life in the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. Henry Thomas Riley (London: Longman, 1868), pp. 356–8.
- 8 Honeybourne, 'The Fleet and its neighbourhood', 59.
- 9 On 23 July 1341 John Oubrey, mason, was accused of being a common forestaller of paving stones. Forestalling was the process of buying goods before they came to the open market with the intention of selling them on at a profit. This involvement of middlemen was illegal. Evidence was given to the effect that a certain stranger named John Joye had offered for sale at Fleet Bridge a boatload of stone for 7s. to Thomas de Banham, and that John Oubrey had immediately offered him 8s. 3d. A jury from the neighbourhood of Fleet Bridge

- found him guilty of forestalling; *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls AD 1323–1482*, ed. A. H. Thomas and P. E. Jones, 6 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926–61), vol. 1, p. 139.
- 10 The first reference to Seacoal Lane appears in 1228: Henry A. Harben (ed.), *A Dictionary of London* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1918), p. 522; Eilert Ekwall, *Street Names of the City of London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 109. For water-associated place names, see two chapters in Blair (ed.), *Waterways and Canal-Building*: Della Hooke, 'Use of waterways in Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 37–54; and Ann Cole, 'The place-name evidence for water transport in early medieval England', pp. 55–84.
 - 11 *The Victoria History of the County of Hertford*, ed. William Page, 4 vols (London: Archibald Constable, 1902–23), vol. 3, p. 383; K. G. T. McDonnell, *Medieval London Suburbs* (London: Phillimore, 1978), p. 73.
 - 12 Ethel Stokes, 'Presentments against the bishops of London 1425–1493', *Home Counties Magazine*, 13 (1911), 229–32 (231); London, TNA, MS KB 27/748, m. 131.
 - 13 Douglas Moss, 'The economic development of a Middlesex village', *Agricultural History Review*, 28 (1986), 104–14 (108–10).
 - 14 McDonnell, *Medieval London Suburbs*, pp. 67–9, 73.
 - 15 *The Statutes of the Realm: From Original Records 1101–1713*, ed. A. Luders, Sir T. Edlyn Tomlins, J. France, W. E. Tauton and J. Raithby, 12 vols (London: Eyre and Strahan, 1810–28), vol. 2 (1816), pp. 267–8; W. T. Jackman, *The Development of Transportation in Modern England*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916), vol. 1, p. 26.
 - 16 Nicholas Barton, *The Lost Rivers of London: A Study of their Effects upon London and Londoners, and the Effects of London and Londoners upon Them* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1962; repub. Historical Publications, 1992), p. 83; T. C. Barker and C. I. Savage, *An Economic History of Transport in Britain*, 3rd edn (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1974), p. 23.
 - 17 *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls*, vol. 2, p. 71, n. 2; *Liber albus: The White Book of the City of London*, ed. and trans. Henry Thomas Riley (London: Richard Griffin, 1861), p. 409; Vanessa Harding, 'The Port of London in the fourteenth century: its topography, administration and trade' (PhD dissertation, University of St Andrews, 1983), pp. 3–8; *Calendar of Letter Books*, vol. K, p. 313.
 - 18 *Calendar of Letter Books*, vol. I, pp. 263–4.
 - 19 *Calendar of Letter Books*, vol. I, pp. 263–4.
 - 20 Lightermen were the operators of lighters or small rowing boats used for moving goods, often from larger ships to the quayside.
 - 21 *Statutes of the Realm*, vol. 3 (1817), pp. 128–9.
 - 22 *Statutes of the Realm*, vol. 3 (1817), pp. 290–2.

- 23 Whirimen were the operators of wherries or small boats often used for ferry or other passenger services.
- 24 It was agreed that watermen would elect fifty-five assistants, who nominated twenty candidates for office, and four were selected annually to serve for two years each, so there were eight at any one time: Walter Marcel Stern, *The Company of Watermen and Lightermen of the City of London: The Earliest London Transport Executive* (London: Corporation of London, 1981), p. 37.
- 25 Stern, *The Company of Watermen*, p. 38.
- 26 James A. Galloway, 'London's grain supply: changes in production, distribution and consumption during the fourteenth century', *Franco-British Studies*, 20 (1996), 23–34 (30).
- 27 On the late Roman and Anglo-Saxon origins of the dock at Queenhithe, see Julian Ayre, Robin Wroe-Brown, with Richard Malt, 'Æthelred's Hythe to Queenhithe: the origin of a London dock', *Medieval Life*, 5 (1996), 14–25.
- 28 Faggots were bundles of brushwood, rods and sticks of roughly equal size tied together. Talwood and billets were heavier and thicker pieces of wood although they too were sometimes sold in bundles: James A. Galloway, Derek Keene and Margaret Murphy, 'Fuelling the city: production and distribution of firewood and fuel in London's region, 1290–1400', *Economic History Review*, 49 (1996), 447–72 (451).
- 29 Galloway, Keene and Murphy, 'Fuelling the city', 453.
- 30 *Memorials of London*, ed. Riley, p. 254. Galloway, Keene and Murphy, 'Fuelling the city', 452.
- 31 *Calendar of Letter Books*, vol. G, p. 206.
- 32 Galloway, Keene and Murphy, 'Fuelling the city', 452.
- 33 A shout (Middle Dutch/Middle Low German) was a type of Thames barge; by the late thirteenth century it was the most common type of boat used on the Thames both above and below London for carrying goods to the city: Derek Keene and Laura Wright, 'A city, its river and their languages: London to 1550', in Carlo M. Travaglini (ed.), *La città e il fiume (secoli XIII–XIX)*, Collection de l'Ecole française de Rome 394 (Rome: École française de Rome, 2008), pp. 5–21 (p. 19). Laura Wright, *Sources of London English: Medieval Thames Vocabulary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 149.
- 34 *Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Husting, London, 1258–1688*, ed. Reginald R. Sharpe, 2 vols (London: Corporation of London, 1890), vol. 2, p. 133. A batell (Old French) was a small rowing boat: *MED batel(le)* (n.) a.
- 35 Galloway, Keene and Murphy, 'Fuelling the city', 452.
- 36 Christine L. Winter, 'The Portsoken presentments: an analysis of a London ward in the fifteenth century', *London and Middlesex Archaeological Society*, 56 (2005), 97–161 (124–36).

- 37 *Calendar of Close Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office 1272–1509*, 47 vols (London: Stationery Office, 1892–1963), vol. 12 (1364–8), p. 74.
- 38 Harding, 'The Port of London', p. 55.
- 39 *Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis: Liber albus*, ed. Henry Thomas Riley, Rolls Series, 2 vols (London: Longman, 1859), vol. 1, p. lxxv.
- 40 *Liber albus*, pp. 206–7; William Kellaway, 'John Carpenter's *Liber albus*', *Guildhall Studies in London History*, 3:2 (1978), 67–84 (77).
- 41 *Memorials of London*, ed. Riley, p. 254.
- 42 *Memorials of London*, ed. Riley, p. 254.
- 43 Henry Humpherus, *History of the Origin and Progress of the Company of Watermen and Lightermen of the River Thames*, 3 vols (London: no pub., 1874–6), vol. 1, p. 41. The original source is unidentified.
- 44 Humpherus, *History of the Origin and Progress of the Company of Watermen*, p. 66. The original source is unidentified.
- 45 Christine Carpenter (ed.), *Kingsford's Stonor Letters and Papers 1290–1483* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 260–1.
- 46 Carpenter (ed.), *Stonor Letters*, pp. 301–2, 321–2, 401–2. The Somer family of bargemen was probably related to John Somere, bargeman of the parish of St Benet Paul's Wharf, whose will was proved in 1417: London, LMA, DL/C/B/004/MS09171/2, fol. 365.
- 47 Stow, *Annales*, p. 498.
- 48 W. H. St John Hope, *Windsor Castle: An Architectural History*, 2 vols (London: Country Life, 1913), vol. 1, p. 152.
- 49 James Masschaele, 'Transport costs in medieval England', *Economic History Review*, n.s. 46 (1993), 266–79.
- 50 Harding, 'The Port of London', pp. 302–3.
- 51 London, LMA, Journal 7, COL/CC/01/01/007, fol. 26v; Letter Book L, COL/AD/01/11, fol. 12.
- 52 A. D. Mills, *A Dictionary of London Place-Names* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 197. The *OED* provides this meaning for its use in 1463: *pool* (n.1) 2b. 'the part of the Thames between London Bridge and Cuckold's Point, used esp. for shipping', but the 1463 reference suggests a specific landing stage.
- 53 [London] LMA, CLA/007/FN/02/060, p. 600.
- 54 Henry Littlehales (ed.), *The Medieval Records of a London City Church, St Mary at Hill, AD 1420–1559*, EETS os 125 (London: Oxford University Press, 1904), p. 256.
- 55 *The Accounts of the Churchwardens of the Parish of St Michael Cornhill in the City of London from 1456 to 1608*, ed. William Henry Overall (London: The Church of St Michael Cornhill, 1853–5 and 1865–8), pp. 94–6.
- 56 [London] LMA, CLA/007/FN/01/019, fols 164, 215.
- 57 [London] LMA, CLA/007/FN/02/060, p. 317.
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- 59 [London] LMA, CLA/007/FN/019, fols 66–7, 71, 90–2, 178, 215, 231; CLA/007/FN/02/060, pp. 230, 273–4, 316, 458, 548, 653, 741, 825,

- 1068, 1144, 1228; CLA/007/FN/02/004, fols 51v, 117v, 128v, 139, 159v, 214, 271v, 283v, 313; CLA/007/FN/02/005, fols 11, 66v; CLA/007/FN/02/006, fol. 130.
- 60 St John Hope, *Windsor Castle*, vol. 1, pp. 141, 163.
- 61 James Field Willard, 'Inland transportation in England during the fourteenth century', *Speculum*, 1:4 (1926), 361–74 (370).
- 62 TNA, MS JUST1/376, m. 23v.
- 63 TNA, MS JUST1/383, m. 12v. At this time it appears that thirteen men found employment in operating this ferry: 'William de Boloigne, John Page, Nicholas atte Dene, William Hardy, [illeg] Boloigne, Richard Trewe, William Fisshere, Giles de Grenewich, John Gerveys senior, John Gerveys junior, Richard Hardy, William Lucas and Geoffrey Page'.
- 64 St Mary Graces was at that time the beneficiary of the manor of Gravesend, which was held in trust on their behalf: Caroline M. Barron and Matthew Davies (eds), *The Religious Houses of London and Middlesex* (London: Centre for Metropolitan History & Victoria County History, 2007), p. 77; Humpherus, *History of the Origin and Progress*, vol. 1, p. 31.
- 65 Humpherus, *History of the Origin and Progress*, vol. 1, p. 31.
- 66 *Liber albus*, p. 209; [London] LMA, Letter Book G, COL/AD/01/007, fol. 88v.
- 67 *Calendar of Letter Books*, vol. 1, pp. 263–4; *Liber albus*, p. 209.
- 68 *Calendar of Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office 1232–1509, 1547–63*, 64 vols (London: Stationery Office, 1891–1948), Henry IV, vol. 1, 1399–1401, p. 542.
- 69 Eyre of Kent 1293–4, quoted in Robert Pierce Cruden, *The History of the Town of Gravesend in the County of Kent and of the Port of London* (London: Pickering, 1843), pp. 56–8. The parish of Higham lay in the marshes of north Kent and was bordered on the northern side by the Thames. Edward Hasted states that there had long been a ferry at this location between Kent and Essex and that Higham was also the depot for the shipping of corn from Kent to London: Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, 12 vols (Canterbury: W. Bristow, 1797–1801; repr. Wakefield: E. P. Publishing, 1972), vol. 3, pp. 481–3.
- 70 Higham Village History Group, www.highamvillagehistory.org.uk/stmarys.html. Accessed 27 June 2015.
- 71 Frank L. Dix, *Royal River Highway: A History of the Passenger Boats and Services on the River Thames* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1985), p. 28.
- 72 London, LMA, DL/C/B/004/MS09171/2, fol. 148; DL/C/B/004/MS09171/5, fol. 12. McDonnell, *Medieval London Suburbs*, p. 71.
- 73 Dix, *Royal River Highway*, p. 29.
- 74 Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey*, vol. 2, pp. 234, 250–1.
- 75 [London] LMA, Journal 3, COL/CC/01/01/003, fol. 123v.
- 76 *Liber quotidianus contrarotulatoris garderobae: Anno regni regis Edwardi Primi vicesimo octavo*, ed. John Topham (London: J. Nichols, 1787), pp. 51, 53.

- 77 *Calendar of Letter Books*, vol. G, p. 301.
- 78 [London] LMA, Journal 3, COL/CC/01/01/003, fol. 123v.
- 79 *Statutes of the Realm*, vol. 3 (1817), pp. 128–9.
- 80 They did not have to commence the journey until they had this number of passengers.
- 81 Littlehales, *Medieval Records of ... St Mary at Hill*, p. 269.
- 82 *The Churchwardens' Accounts of the Parish of All Hallows London Wall in the City of London 1455–1536*, ed. Charles Welch (London: All Hallows, 1912), p. 5; London, LMA, P69/DUN1/B/001/MS04887, fol. 30.
- 83 Littlehales, *Medieval Records of ... St Mary at Hill*, p. 203.
- 84 *Churchwardens' Accounts ... of All Hallows London Wall*, ed. Welch, p. 49. Littlehales, *Medieval Records of ... St Mary at Hill*, p. 256.
- 85 Littlehales, *Medieval Records of ... St Mary at Hill*, p. 382.
- 86 *The Accounts of ... St Michael Cornhill*, ed. Overall, p. 85.
- 87 On the navigability of the Thames above London to Oxford, and on the changing patterns of navigation from London to Oxford in the medieval and early modern period, see R. B. Peberdy, 'Navigation on the River Thames between London and Oxford in the late Middle Ages: a reconsideration', *Oxoniensia*, 61 (1996), 311–40.
- 88 Galloway, 'London's grain supply', 30.

Conquest, roads and resistance in medieval Wales

Dylan Foster Evans

In his *General View of the Agriculture and Domestic Economy of South Wales* of 1815, the Reverend Walter Davies ('Gwallter Mechain') relates a tale concerning Valentine Morris (1727–89) of Piercefield near Chepstow. The Monmouthshire gentleman was giving evidence at the House of Commons and was asked what roads were to be had in the county. 'None' was his answer. 'How do you travel then?' he was asked. 'In ditches,' came the reply.¹ This anecdote is one of many that may be adduced as evidence for the egregious condition of the road network in early modern Wales. Indeed, historians and geographers have often drawn attention to the desperate condition of Welsh roadways.² E. G. Bowen, for instance, claimed that by the mid-eighteenth century nothing of importance had been added to the road network put in place by the Romans, and that 'wheeled traffic sank axle-deep in the mire and wagons frequently had to be dismantled before they could be dislodged'.³ The English travellers who came to Wales in increasing numbers in the eighteenth century would often tell of wearisome, if not downright terrifying, experiences on Welsh roads.⁴ A simple extrapolation on the basis of such references might lead one to assume that the situation in medieval Wales was equally bad, if not worse. It would be easy to apply Bowen's description of Georgian-era wagons sinking hopelessly into the mud to Henry II's Welsh campaign of 1165, which was prevented from advancing more than a few miles into hostile territory by inadequate roads over the Berwyn mountains compounded by poor weather. This failure angered the king sufficiently to give orders for the blinding of numerous hostages.⁵ Indeed, 'little attention was given to road-making in medieval Wales', wrote J. E. Lloyd in his popular volume on the history of Caernarfonshire, 'and it was rather the Welshman's object to make access to his mountain refuges as difficult as possible'.⁶

Yet early modern complaints regarding Welsh roads need to be tempered. Valentine Morris had travelled to London to lobby for the passing of a turnpike act for Monmouthshire (which was achieved in 1755), and so he may have had reason to exaggerate the deficiencies of the Welsh road network. Indeed, the section of road between Newport and Cardiff was described as 'good', 'fine' and 'excellent' before the coming of the turnpikes.⁷ English travel writers were operating to a certain extent within a colonial discourse that worked to validate English rule in Wales and for which underdeveloped roads proved a useful motif.⁸ In any case, such travellers often used modes of transport that were inappropriate for the terrain they intended to cover. Heather James reminds us that 'the archetypal picture of appalling Welsh roads and difficulties of communication come from the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century demands for roads for wheeled transport'; the roads were probably sufficient for the foot and horse traffic for which they had been used for centuries.⁹

There is, therefore, little evidence to suggest that medieval Wales was particularly ill served by its road network. Gerald of Wales, for instance, has little to say of roads. He is certainly ready, in his *Journey through Wales* of 1188, to hold the Welsh to account for what he sees as their underdeveloped economic, social and agrarian practices, but any significant failure in the road system goes unmentioned.¹⁰ Indeed, Rees Davies has noted that 'medieval Wales was by no means so lacking in roads and tracks as the comments of foreign observers might suggest'.¹¹ Parts of the network of Roman roads still survived, of course. Bridges were built under the auspices of the native rulers, although such improvements in infrastructure were not always welcomed across Offa's Dyke. In 1265 Henry III gave express orders that Maredudd ap Rhys Gryg of Deheubarth should not be allowed to build a bridge over the Teifi at Newcastle Emlyn for fear that it should encourage what the king saw as 'the malice of thieves, who will be able the more easily to make their evil attacks'.¹² Upland ridgeways (Welsh *cefnffyrdd*) were used to traverse the land with surprising speed and travel 'within and across Wales was not as difficult or unusual as bland contemporary observations might suggest'.¹³ In the inspired opening chapter of his study of the Glyndŵr revolt, Davies brings late fourteenth-century Wales to life by tracing the itineraries of two imaginary travellers, an English official and a Welsh poet. The official is most at home on the lowland routes and coastal passages, in contrast to the Welsh poet who travels the river valleys and crosses

the high ground with apparent ease.¹⁴ Different as they and their attitudes to the Welsh landscape may be, both are able to undertake their journeys without undue hazards. At the end of the medieval period, it is notable that Sir Edward Don in 1524 could travel with relative ease through south and mid Wales, covering around thirty miles a day.¹⁵ And, as in the case of Gerald of Wales some three and a half centuries earlier, John Leland's account of his journeys in Wales in the 1530s contains hardly any references to roads.¹⁶

The Welsh poets were the travellers par excellence in late medieval Wales. They moved between the halls of the *uchelwyr* (the Welsh gentry or nobility) singing the praises of various patrons. As a result much of their lives must have been spent on the road. They were certainly not the only class of long-distance travellers in Wales (one could mention drovers, merchants, churchmen, pilgrims and officials of various kinds), but the particular nature of their craft normally kept them on the move within the Welsh-speaking districts (which, of course, included significant parts of modern Shropshire and Herefordshire). They had various *cylchoedd clera* or bardic circuits, and a consideration of the geographical distribution of the patrons of a productive poet like Lewys Glyn Cothi (*fl.* 1447–89) shows that he was familiar with all four corners of Wales.¹⁷ The poets would sometimes phrase their verse as if to suggest that they were declaiming it while still on the journey to a patron's home, but that was more of a generalized topos than a meaningful exploration of the realities of travel.¹⁸ Although life on the road must have been intimately familiar to poets such as Lewys, it was only rarely the subject of their poetry. That was more concerned with the destination, the gentleman's hall, than with the journey there. Occasionally, a particularly difficult journey might be deemed worthy of mention: an overflowing river, a snowstorm or some other misfortune gave cause for discussion once in a while.¹⁹ But on the whole, travel was taken for granted, and was not a particular cause for concern from the poets' point of view. As a result the fundamental question of how they found their way from patron to patron is difficult to answer. Did they make use of guides? Probably, given that the fourteenth-century Merionethshire poet Madog Dwygraig boasts in one poem of being able to travel through south Wales *heb fyneigiaid ffyrdd* ('without road guides').²⁰ Were they able to manage by asking for assistance from those they met en route? Or did they have other means of finding the way? To what extent was route-finding a part of their training? Without detailed evidence, these are difficult questions to answer.

The terminology of roads in medieval and early modern Welsh points to another, not unexpected, feature of mobility in Wales, namely contact with England.²¹ Many of the medieval and early modern terms for routeways were English borrowings. Perhaps the most common was *ffordd*, from the Anglo-Saxon word that gives *ford* in modern English. It is noteworthy that this English word was also borrowed into Cornish (*forth*) and that both Welsh and Cornish developed the same meaning of 'road'.²² The same word may even have been borrowed back by the English language in some western districts with the specific meaning of a Roman road.²³ Unlike many other western European languages, Welsh did not borrow the Latin term for a paved road, (*via*) *strata*, despite the fact that borrowings from Latin terms in the fields of architecture and engineering (such as *ffenestr* 'window' and *pont* 'bridge') are commonplace.²⁴ Such a borrowing would have produced the noun *ystrad*, a form identical with a pre-existing noun meaning 'valley, vale'.²⁵ The Welsh *stryd* may be traced to Latin, but only via the English *street* and its Germanic predecessors. Welsh *lôn* comes from a Middle English form of *lane*, and *wtre*, a term for a narrow lane, seemingly comes from the English *outrake*. Native terms for roadways do exist, of course, and include *ôl* 'track', *llwybr* 'path(way)', *heol* 'road' (although its origins are somewhat unclear) and *sarn* 'causeway or paved road', the last named often found in place names that refer to Roman roads.²⁶

It is clear that medieval Wales was not lacking in roadways of various kinds, and the Welsh language had a rich and varied terminology with which to describe them. On the whole, the roadways appear to have served their purposes sufficiently well, despite the fact that the typical Welsh road probably 'made and maintained itself' to a large extent, to use C. T. Flower's well-known characterization of English highways.²⁷ But this chapter will aim to demonstrate two previously underappreciated yet interconnected aspects of medieval Welsh roadways: firstly, that road building at various times in medieval Wales may well have been significant; and secondly that road building had a part to play in the shaping of identities and ideologies in medieval Wales.

Roadways, princes and power

Despite the relatively recent acknowledgement of the fact that Wales had an extensive network of useable roads in the Middle Ages, the belief that no *new* roads were built by the medieval

Welsh has been tenacious. Similar views have long been held with regard to medieval England, but these are now being questioned. David Harrison, for instance, has argued that 'the notion that medieval roads were little more than rights of way and that the medieval roads system consisted of splendid bridges joined together by oceans of mud seems inherently implausible'.²⁸ Within a specifically Welsh context, practical investigations of routeways may indicate that Welsh roads were sometimes more than the unplanned product of generations of wayfaring feet and hooves. David Williams has noted that at least some Cistercian monasteries did take responsibility for the roads that they used and that they may have been responsible for building some of them, such as the Stony Way near Tintern.²⁹ In particular, Andrew Fleming's study of the Monks' Trod, a routeway that links the Cistercian monasteries of Strata Florida in Ceredigion (founded 1164) and Cwm-hir in Maellienydd (1176, possibly a re-foundation), with a sub-branch to Strata Marcella near Welshpool (1170), has shown it to be, for much of its course, a constructed road.³⁰ Dating roads is notoriously difficult, and the name 'Monks' Trod' itself appears to be post-medieval.³¹ But the Cistercian connection implies strongly that this road was constructed before the Dissolution, and, given the twelfth-century dates of the foundation of Strata Florida and Cwm-hir, probably significantly before then. It seems that 'the route of the Trod, at least, was *required* from the late 1170s and by the early 1180s at the latest'.³²

For much of its course, Monks' Trod has been shown to be a constructed roadway. It would appear that little or no construction work was done in places where the going was good, level and dry and thus ideal for the passage of horses. But much of the route is through hilly terrain where the road was formed mainly by means of the 'cut and fill' technique, whereby material excavated from the cut is used to build the related embankment. The road thus formed is still clearly visible in the landscape. Indeed, Fleming comments that in places it is so well preserved as to give the impression of a narrow-gauge railway track. Constructing the road would have been a significant undertaking, for at times it has been cut into solid rock, with bare stone serving as the road bed. It seems also that parts of the road were metalled, with paving slabs and cobbles still apparent in some stretches today.³³

Since the road links two monasteries, it might be reasonable to assume that it was the Cistercians themselves who were for the most part responsible for its construction. Indeed, the 1300 restoration

of Strata Florida following the Welsh uprising of 1294–5 was made subject to the condition that ‘the woods and ways around it, which may become a source of danger in the future, be cut down and repaired’.³⁴ Not only does this suggest that the monasteries were involved in road maintenance in peacetime, but it also shows that the upkeep of the roads was also of interest to the secular government. Fleming thus argues that ‘some 13th-century roads functioned essentially as instruments of elite control’ and if so, that ‘it would not be surprising to find that the more critical ones were *constructed* where necessary’.³⁵

If there were indeed a secular impetus to road building in high medieval native Wales, from where would it have come? Two rulers stand out as having most to gain from the creation of such a network at this time: Rhys ap Gruffudd of Deheubarth (‘the Lord Rhys’, 1131/2–1197) and Llywelyn ab Iorwerth of Gwynedd (‘Llywelyn the Great’, c. 1173–1240).³⁶ And while Llywelyn certainly did operate extensively in the middle March (the lands between the Wye Valley above Hereford in the south and the Severn in the north), including Maelienydd, it seems likely that the advantages of a route between the monasteries would have first become apparent during the Lord Rhys’s reign. He certainly had the vision and manpower to make it a reality. As Fleming rightly notes, Rhys ‘understood the strategic value of fixed facilities – castles, monasteries and existing Anglo-Norman boroughs – in expanding and maintaining political, economic and ideological control’.³⁷ Although the roads remain undated from an archaeological perspective, Fleming argues that an earlier date remains the most likely, making the case for Lord Rhys’s involvement strong, if circumstantial. Given what we know of Rhys and the development of both the secular and ecclesiastical infrastructure of Deheubarth under his leadership, the construction of roads under his direct (or indirect) control might not be unexpected.

Fleming found no historical sources to support his argument regarding Rhys’s involvement in building the Monks’ Trod. But an intriguing reference in a poem by Gwynfardd Brycheiniog, one of Rhys’s court poets, does – at first glance at least – associate Rhys directly with road building. Gwynfardd Brycheiniog (his name associates him with the territory of Brycheiniog or Brecknock in the south-eastern marches) has left only two poems, one of which is a famous composition to Saint David that may have been performed in Rhys’s presence towards the end of the 1170s. The other poem is a fifty-line eulogy of Rhys himself, which is also undated

but which was probably composed after 1170, by which time Rhys was a force to be reckoned with throughout all of Wales.³⁸

This poem's main theme is Rhys's military prowess and the description of him is consistent with what might be expected of a typically tightly constructed poem of this genre. But in one line Rhys is described intriguingly as 'Seri gyuarpar, sathar sathru'.³⁹ This may literally be translated as '[One who] provides a paved path/causeway, [one who] treads the track'. Taken literally, it would seem that this is evidence for Rhys's involvement in road building, especially as the term *seri* 'paved path/causeway' closely reflects the nature of sections of a road such as the Monks' Trod. But we must sound a note of caution. In the first place, the poets operated within a conservative discourse and tended to show precious little interest in innovative building works such as castles or monasteries, let alone roads.⁴⁰ Secondly, the poets occasionally depicted their patrons treading their enemies underfoot, or slaying so many as to create a path or causeway from their bodies. For instance, Llywarch Prydydd y Moch talks of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth's martial ability in the following terms: 'Meirw sengi mal seri sathar' ('there was treading on the dead like stepping on a paved path/causeway').⁴¹ So it may be that Gwynfardd Brycheiniog's words are intended to be taken figuratively. Even so, there is no direct reference to enemies in Gwynfardd's line, and if Rhys had been involved in building roads by this time the audience may have been able to choose to understand *seri* in its literal sense. The possibility remains that the poet might be alluding (even if indirectly) to road-building works completed under Rhys's auspices.

The same theme appears to return later in the poem, as the poet makes repeated use of the singular and plural forms of *fort* (modern Welsh *ffordd* 'road'):

Ysafyn niuer Rys yn llys Dinefwr,
 Fyrt myrt gyrrh glydwr glod chwenychu.
 Fort wosgort ddiwosgort ddiwasgaru,
 Fort aergun wodorun, wodrwyf teulu.
 Fyrt kerteu a thretheu a thraethu – molawd,
 Milyoet wawr wasgawd, wennawd wetu.⁴²

[Rhys's host in the court of Dinefwr was light [*or* swift], / [there were] roads for multitudes desiring the fame of [the] mighty defender. / A road for a retinue that is not a retinue as it does not disperse, / a road of a leader's tumult in war, [one who is the object] of the household troops' clamour. / Roads of poems and tribute [*or*

taxes] and the proclaiming of praise, / the protection of a lord of thousands, [one who] deserves a song of praise.]

Here again the use of *fort* may well be metaphorical rather than literal, for the word has an extended set of meanings ('way', 'manner' and so forth). Nevertheless, the coupling of Rhys's power with the *fyr*t or 'roads' that are of use to warriors, to poets and for the gathering of renders or tribute hints at the role a well-defined network of roads could play in the expression of a Welsh prince's authority during the latter part of the twelfth century.

The other significant body of native texts that relate to pre-conquest Wales is the Laws of Hywel, found in manuscripts from the thirteenth century onward, but which contain material of earlier, though uncertain, dates.⁴³ Again, mentions of roads in these texts are usually fleeting, although they do provide us with some incidental details.⁴⁴ Roads could operate as boundaries between townlands, for instance, and their removal would occasion compensatory payment to both landowners and to the king.⁴⁵ They were also used by armed travellers who had specific hunting rights when shooting from the road: 'If it happens that a wayfarer aims a blow at an animal from the road, whether with an arrow or with any other thing, it is proper for him to pursue it until he takes it, but it is not proper for him to aim at it or pursue it unless he hits it from the road.'⁴⁶ One of the most detailed references to roads occurs in the legal triads (so called because of the grouping of sayings in threes, a feature of medieval Welsh literature in general) that belong to the so-called Cyfnerth Redaction of the laws. The earliest manuscripts of this body of texts belong to the fourteenth century, but the material itself is likely to have been earlier, perhaps even late twelfth-century.⁴⁷ One triad refers to the 'three ways a silver rod is paid to the king and a gold cup with a gold lid on it', one of which is for 'breaking the peace of the road', or, as another version of the same text has it, for 'breaking the protection of the road on a homeless needy person on the road'.⁴⁸ It appears that Welsh jurists were developing the idea that the king's peace should obtain on the road, an innovation that may probably be traced to contact with the English legal system.

In the first half of the twelfth century, the concept of the 'King's Four Highways' grew to be influential in England, despite being what Alan Cooper has called 'a twelfth-century fabrication' created by Henry of Huntingdon.⁴⁹ It passed from historiography into legal discourse, and was, for instance, incorporated into the *Leges Edwardi Confessoris* (probably compiled soon after

1136).⁵⁰ Geoffrey of Monmouth developed the same idea in his treatment of historic roads, grafting it onto the story of the British kings Dunvallo Molmutius (Welsh *Dyfnwal Moelmud*) and his son Belinus (*Beli*), as well as making use of his personal knowledge of the Roman road that ran past Monmouth.⁵¹ In so doing, Geoffrey may well have been addressing the fact that the extent of the *via regia* was a matter for dispute in the early twelfth century.⁵² But whatever his motivation, thanks to Welsh translators of the *Historia regum Britanniae*, Dyfnwal Moelmud's royal patronage of roads would have been known to Welsh readers by the thirteenth century.⁵³ And if Welsh princes were actively involved in road building before the end of the twelfth century, the extension of their legal authority over those roads would not be an unexpected development. Indeed, the charter supposedly granted to Aberconwy Abbey by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in 1199 contains the provision that the monks and their servants be excluded from the requirement to pay *paasium* ('road dues') to the prince.⁵⁴ The charter, however, is a later creation whose production is probably to be linked to the aftermath of the Edwardian conquest of 1282–3.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, it strongly suggests that the princes of Gwynedd were collecting road dues from at least some of their subjects during the final years of Gwynedd's independence.

The inhabitants of medieval Wales, nevertheless, were well aware that it was the Romans who were responsible for the best of the Welsh roads. It is also clear that the relationship with their Roman predecessors was an active force in constructing identity in medieval Wales.⁵⁶ Indeed, it may be that the remarkable Roman tetrapylon (a type of four-gated structure generally built at a cross-roads) at Caerleon was destroyed by the English in the thirteenth century specifically in order to bring about an 'erasure of memory' that would undermine Welsh ideological claims on the territory.⁵⁷ Native knowledge regarding Roman roads is given its most detailed textual expression in the prose tale *Breudwyt Maxen Wledig* ('The Dream of the Emperor Maxen').⁵⁸ The story concerns the emperor of Rome, Maxen Wledig (loosely based on the Western Roman emperor Magnus Maximus, *d.* 388), who dreams one night of a beautiful maiden in a distant land. Having fallen in love, he sends his men all over the earth in search of her. They eventually find her in a distant fort at Aber Saint (Caernarfon), where she lives with her father, Eudaf. Maxen is taken to see her, the two are married and Maxen gives Eudaf sovereignty over the island of Britain. Back in Rome a usurper seizes power, but aided by the men of

Britain under Eudaf's son Cynan, Maxen recaptures Rome. As an expression of his gratitude, he rewards his British soldiers with the region of Gaul that comes to be known as Llydaw (Brittany).

Elen the daughter of Eudaf is able to determine her own *agweddi* or maiden-fee, namely that Britain should be held by her father under the emperor of Rome, and that three cities be built in locations of her choice. The chief city is to be built in Arfon (Caernarfon), and the other two are located at Caerleon and Carmarthen (all three would have had significant visible Roman remains in the thirteenth century). Having come to Carmarthen in person, 'Elen decided to build great roads from one fort to the other across the Island of Britain. Because of that they are called Ffyrdd Elen Luyddog, since she came from the Island of Britain, and the men of the Island of Britain would never have assembled those large armies for anyone but her.'⁵⁹

This identification of Elen with road building clearly relates to the roadway known as Sarn Elen (Elen's Road or Causeway), which is the traditional name of the Roman road that runs westwards from Caerleon to Carmarthen, and then northwards to the Conway Valley before turning eastwards to Chester.⁶⁰ Taken as a whole, the road traverses great stretches of the country, and as Brynley Roberts has noted, *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic's* anonymous author 'would have known of this important road encompassing almost the whole of Wales and no doubt saw its value as a symbol of Maxen's pan-Welsh status'.⁶¹ Of course, that a Welsh littérateur should think in terms of 'pan-Welsh' status is of note in itself, given the political fragmentation of medieval Wales. Thus Roberts may well be correct to argue that the tale relates to political developments in thirteenth-century Wales, and in particular to Llywelyn ab Iorwerth's attempts to secure for himself the position of primary native ruler in Wales.⁶² Caernarfon was a key location within Llywelyn's kingdom of Gwynedd and his military campaigning enabled him to take Carmarthen in 1215. And although he was never in direct control of Caerleon, his ally Morgan ap Llywelyn held sway there from 1214 to 1216. The events of the years between 1215 and 1217 thus resonate particularly closely with the text. It may well be that the well-known Maxen legend (which Geoffrey of Monmouth had related in a variant form), coupled with the unifying motif of Elen's roads, has been reworked in order to present a claim for Gwynedd's pre-eminence over the whole of Wales. If that is the case, it is the clearest example of the use of the Welsh road network in a political context. In poetry,

legal texts and prose narrative, roads and road building – whether real or imaginary – may well have had significant ideological capital within Welsh cultural and political life by the thirteenth century, if not before.

Axes, maps and poetry

For Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, then, roadways may have had a use as a means of unifying his disparate principality, militarily but also ideologically. He would also have known that ease of travel is a two-edged sword, and the Welsh often had occasion to be thankful for the impassability of some of the routes in their heartlands. Most famously, an ambush in north-east Wales almost proved deadly for Henry II on his campaign against Gwynedd in 1157, when Welsh soldiers threatened the king's life in a well-planned attack as the royal forces passed through heavily wooded country.⁶³ Lessons had to be learned, one of which was the necessity of clearing safe passage through woodland. In an attack in 1165, for instance, Henry ordered the felling of trees in the Ceiriog Valley to ease the passage of royal troops.⁶⁴ This is the earliest known example of military felling in Wales, but it is certainly not the last; it would become a constant feature of English military policy in Wales throughout the thirteenth century. In 1223 and 1224, for instance, Henry III ordered that woods should be cut in the area of Cardigan and Carmarthen, and around Montgomery.⁶⁵ In the truces drawn up between Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and Henry III and the Lord Edward at Oxford in 1258 and at Montgomery in 1260, it was agreed that roads and passes should not be obstructed by woods or anything else.⁶⁶ But it was in the wars of 1277 and 1282/3 that the military felling of trees in order to provide safe passage for English soldiers reached its height.

In 1277 one of Edward I's strategic aims in his campaign against Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was to clear a safe route into Wales so as to protect his forces and their supply lines into England.⁶⁷ A new road some thirty miles long was cut from Chester to the River Conwy between April and August of that year by specialist workers from various parts of England: sawyers, woodcutters, carpenters, masons, diggers and charcoal burners. In August, on the section between Flint and Rhuddlan, between 1500 and 1800 men were employed under the direction of Edward's household knights, with another 700 to 1,000 between Rhuddlan and Degannwy in September.⁶⁸ These were huge numbers of men,

equivalent in size to the largest Welsh towns. Less formal means of clearing woods were also encouraged – in February 1278 a free reign was given to anyone who cleared woodland and improved the passes in certain parts of north-east Wales.⁶⁹ In January 1278 Rhys ap Maredudd ap Rhys Gryg of Ystrad Tywi was ordered to enlarge the passes in his woods between Carmarthen and Brecon, and similar orders were given to other leading Welshmen, two Marcher Lords and the abbots of Strata Florida and Talley. Much the same order was given again in June 1280; this time the recipients included the abbot of Whitland.⁷⁰ The numerous references to Cistercian monasteries may indicate what were considered to be convenient mustering points, but they may also, as we have already seen, hint at pre-existing responsibilities for roads. A similar pattern was followed in 1282. In June 300 woodcutters and charcoal burners from south-west England were sent to cut woods in south Wales and on 11 December (the day of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's death) some 800 woodcutters were ordered to gather at Chester.⁷¹ In June 1283 Edward I ordered Edmund Mortimer, Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of Powys and his son Owain to clear the woods under their control so that 'each pass shall be a bow-shot in breadth (*in latitudine baliste conineat unum tractum*)'.⁷² These events played a key part in the conquest, and by the end of 1283, for the time being at least, the resistance of the Welsh was broken. The ensuing settlement made specific provision for the upkeep of roadways: the Statute of Wales of 1284 required that the newly instigated office of the sheriff should inquire 'Of Hindrance, Restraint, and narrowing of the Highway. Of Walls, Houses, Gates, Ditches, and Marlpits raised or made near unto the publick way (*iter publicum*), to the Nuisance of the same Way, and to the Danger of Passengers.'⁷³

Later uprisings in Wales were met with a similar response. In 1287 Rhys ap Maredudd ap Rhys Gryg, one of the few native princes to have retained some of his land after 1282–3, led a rebellion in south-west Wales. In May 1288 or 1289 Alan de Plugenet, the English constable of Dinefwr Castle, reported that he could not leave the castle as it needed to be guarded closely because Rhys and his forces were encamped in the surrounding woods.⁷⁴ But Edward's response was swift, decisive and familiar, as both soldiers and woodsmen were sent to crush the rising. Amongst them were 200 woodcutters from Chester who were ordered to gather at Llanbadarn Fawr in July 1287, as well as 400 sent to Monmouth and 2,000 woodcutters and diggers ordered to Brecon. In May

1288 the justiciars of Chester, North Wales and South Wales as well as Marcher Lords were ordered to cut trees in passes and to clear and widen those passes wherever there was need.⁷⁵

That this work would have had a profound effect on the landscape is undeniable. In fact, it left its trace in the archaeological record: the pollen count from wetland deposits indicates that the end of the thirteenth century saw extensive tree felling in south-west Wales.⁷⁶ The scale of these operations was large, and costly, but also of crucial importance. In the words of William Linnard, the leading authority on Welsh woodlands, 'the axe and the flame were weapons just as important as the lance and the bow'.⁷⁷ The historian Michael Prestwich comes to a similar conclusion: 'perhaps the most useful infantry in the Welsh wars were those equipped with axes, rather than those armed with pikes or bows'.⁷⁸ Taming the land itself was the key to conquering its inhabitants.

These scars on the landscape left textual reflexes of very different kinds. From the conqueror's point of view, the newly built Welsh roads were incorporated visually into the fourteenth-century Gough map, a creation that has been called 'a document of colonial administration and propaganda, a map not suited simply to wayfaring generally, but one designed above all to engage the imagination of early English *imperial* travelers'.⁷⁹ Completed in the second half of the fourteenth century, the map's original has been dated several decades earlier. Indeed, Daniel Birkholz has argued that the Gough map, in its depiction of the Welsh roadways, 'registers, and may have helped enact, the Edwardian conquest of Wales'.⁸⁰

The Scottish chronicler Walter Bower (1385–1449) refers to English woodcutting and road building during the conquest of Wales in his *Scotichronicon* (composed in the early 1440s). His account is based on the misdeeds of a certain Welsh noble called Penwyn ('Penvyn') who 'was bribed to tell the king to cut with axes certain tracks around a wood and by that route to make a passageway for the army ... This was done, and as a result of this traitor's guidance nearly the whole of Wales was ruined'.⁸¹ Penwyn seeks his reward from Edward, and the king's response is to hang him (along with the gold he claimed as his prize) from the highest gallows as a punishment for his long-standing treachery. Bower may have learned of Penwyn from Welshmen who had been involved in the Glyndŵr rebellion at the beginning of the fifteenth century.⁸² If so, the memory of Edward's road building had lingered long in the memory.

But how did the Welsh themselves respond to the change in their physical environment wrought by English road builders? The question brings to mind one of the most famous lines of medieval Welsh poetry, Gruffudd ab yr Ynad Coch's cataclysmic invocation of oak trees crashing against each other at the death of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1282: 'Poni welwch chwi'r deri yn ymdaraw?' ('See you not the oaks thrashing each other?').⁸³ These oaks are one of a series of signs in the poem that Llywelyn's death has an apocalyptic aspect (alongside falling stars, a land scourged by the sea and the sun hurtling through the sky). The axes of Edward's woodsmen echo in this most famous of lines.

A less dramatic, but more direct, reference occurs in another poem that was probably also composed by Gruffudd. This *englyn* (a four-line stanza) may be a complete poem in its own right, or it may be the only surviving section of a longer work – its only known manuscript witness is a version of a bardic grammar in which it is quoted in order to exemplify a particular type of metre. Whatever its origins, the *englyn* is a clearly a regretful response to the loss of a leader:

Pei byw vy llyw, llew flamdur,
Ysgwyt vriwgalch, valch vilwr,
Ny ladei gat goet Aber,
Ny bydym geith na gweithwyr.⁸⁴

[Were my leader alive, a lion with a flashing sword, / [carrying] a shield with a shattered front, a proud warrior, / an army would not be felling the wood of Aber, / we would not be serfs or workers.]

The death of a leader who had a court at Aber (Abergwyngregyn near Bangor) strongly suggests that this again refers to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. The felling of trees by a hostile force is deemed to be a result of his death, as is the loss of status suffered by the poet and his audience. There may even be a suggestion that the poet and his audience are in some way complicit in the destruction of the wood. Witnessing, let alone contributing to, the cutting of safe roads for the conquerors in the vicinity of a former court of the princes of Gwynedd is a sure sign of servility. Welsh poetry of this period focuses on individuals and their personal honour; references to landscape are incidental, but sometimes significant. There are hints in the work of Gruffudd ab yr Ynad Coch that the destruction of a landscape (and an economic resource) was seen in itself as an attack on the poet's individual freedom and the freedom of his audience.

It indicates a loss of control, a ceding of power to new lords. Roads are recognized as instruments of conquest and colonization. It is a final irony that the cutting of Dafydd ap Gruffudd's woods on the king's orders in order to provide safe passage for royal troops was noted by the Dunstable annalist as one of the reasons why Dafydd took up arms on Palm Sunday 1282, a deed that would lead to his death and that of his brother Llywelyn, and to the Edwardian conquest of Wales.⁸⁵

Recolonizing and decolonizing roads and woodlands

The final textual response to road building that I should like to consider dates from the middle of the fourteenth century. The poets of this century devoted much more attention to landscape than their predecessors, and woodland in particular became a *locus amoenus* for a new kind of love poetry, associated above all with the greatest poet of medieval Wales, Dafydd ap Gwilym (fl. 1340s).⁸⁶ There is sometimes a sense in which woodland offers an alternative from the restrictions of daily life, but as Helen Fulton has noted, the woods to Dafydd are far more than a mere escape from the conventions and frustrations of human society:

[Dafydd's] view of the woodland represents that of his *uchelwyr* audiences ... May's riches are like the florins and fleur-de-lis of the wealthy rulers, and the woodland groves are their mansions, palaces, chambers, and towered fortresses. Courtly activities such as hunting, entertaining, singing, and warfare are also mentioned, so that the whole woodland context serves to epitomize and capture the noble structures of the *uchelwyr*.⁸⁷

Woodlands and warfare, in particular, had long been linked in Wales; it was a key theme in Gerald of Wales's depiction of the Welsh as soldiers. He noticed that Welsh foot soldiers were more effective on the hillsides and in woodland than the heavily armoured and cumbersome English knights.⁸⁸ To defeat the Welsh, he argued, English forces should attack in February and March, when the trees are bare and it is possible to penetrate into the depths of the Welsh woods.⁸⁹ As it happened, Edward I's response to the problem of the Welsh woodland would prove to be even more direct. Nevertheless, for the Welsh, the relationship between woods and warfare had a particular resonance.⁹⁰

Woodlands were also a vital economic resource and so were of material interest to the landowning class to which Dafydd belonged.⁹¹ The struggle between lord and community for the

right to exploit resources such as woodland was a key theme in the post-conquest period. As noted by Rees Davies in his study of the March of Wales, 'it is a struggle which explains in good part the role that the forest plays, in Wales as elsewhere, as an idyllic refuge from the harshness of lordship, in life and literature alike. In the March the struggle had to it yet another dimension – that of native society against foreign authority.'⁹² The woods were a contested space in which the native Welsh had to struggle to retain their local dominance. But the new roadways, built through the old woodlands, were also contested in another way – by the natural regeneration of the woodland itself. Only a few years would be required for colonizing species such as birch (the poets' favourite tree) to begin to regain lost ground. It is in the light of this double contestation – man-made and natural – that I wish to consider one of Dafydd ap Gwilym's most famous poems.

'May and November' is an evocative treatment of the changing of the seasons.⁹³ Its basic premise is that May is a noble horseman or knight who must fight to regain its territory from its graceless winter foe. The poem begins by greeting May in a respectful and welcoming fashion:

Hawddamor, glwysgor glasgoed,
 Fis Mai haf, canys mau hoed,
 Cadarn farchog, serchog sâl,
 Cadwynwyrdd feistr coed anial,
 Cyfaill cariad ac adar,
 Cof y serchogion a'u câr,
 Cennad nawugain cynnagl,
 Caredig urddedig ddadl.
 Mawr a fudd, myn Mair, ei fod,
 Mai, fis difai, yn dyfod
 Ar fryd arddelw, frwd urddas,
 Yn goresgyn pob glyn glas.

[Hail to thee, fair chancel of the greenwood, / summer month of May, since it is this I long for, / mighty knight, lover's boon, / green-chained master of the wild forests, / companion of love and birds, / memory of lovers and their friend, / messenger of ninescore trysts, / affectionate and dignified meeting. / It is most beneficial, by Mary, that he, / May, faultless month, is coming / intent on claiming, warm dignity, / conquering every green vale.]⁹⁴

May is a 'cadarn farchog' ('mighty knight' or 'horseman') who is a companion to the woodland birds and indeed to love itself.⁹⁵

May's aim, nonetheless, is conquest. The battle with winter is, of course, a commonplace of medieval literature, and parallels to Dafydd's poem have been noted in both French and Latin.⁹⁶ The knightly figure himself is also familiar from other parts of the medieval world.⁹⁷ He is, for instance, closely paralleled by thirteenth-century French artwork in which 'May brings a knightly train, for it is the month dedicated to the nobleman and his sport ... At times he carries a lance ... more often he bears something less warlike – a branch, a flower, or his falcon on his wrist.'⁹⁸ A similar figure is also attested elsewhere in a Welsh literary context, although from a later period. In a letter written in 1694 to his relative John Aubrey, Henry Vaughan comments on an anecdote that he had seen in the hand of the Welsh scholar Siôn Dafydd Rhys (*b.* 1533/4, *d.* in or after 1620). It concerns a young Breconshire shepherd who falls asleep while guarding his flock:

he dreamt, that he saw a beautifull young man with a garland of green leafs upon his head, & an hawk upon his fist; with a quiver full of Arrows att his back, coming towards him (whistling several measures or tunes all the way) & att last lett the hawk fly att him, w^{ch} (he dreamt) gott into his mouth & inward parts, & suddenly awakened in a great fear and consternation; butt possessed with such a vein, or gift of poetrie, that he left the sheep & went about the Countrey, making songs upon all occasions, and came to be the most famous Bard in all the Countrey in his time.⁹⁹

Here, the figure is explicitly connected with poetic inspiration, an aspect that is also suggested by Dafydd's portrayal of the month of May. The poem continues to describe the knight's activities:

Gwasgod praff, gwisgad priffyrdd,
Gwisgai bob lle â'i we wyrdd.
Pan ddêl yn ôl rhyfel rhew,
Pill doldir, pall adeildew –
Digrif fydd, mau grefydd grill,
Llwybr obry lle bu'r Ebrill –
Y daw ar uchaf blaen dêr
Caniadau cywion adar ...

[Thick mantle, clothing of highways, / he would dress every place with his green fabric. / When he comes after the war of ice, / meadow's fortress, thickly woven garment – / pleasant will be the path below / where April was (birdsong is my worship) – / then songs of young birds / will come upon oak tops ...]¹⁰⁰

In clothing the highways with his greenery, the knight may be seen to be undoing the work of a previous generation of English woodcutters. The poem is not given a specific geographical location, but Dafydd's home parish of Llanbadarn Fawr in Ceredigion, as we have already noted, had witnessed the presence of hundreds of woodcutters at the end of the thirteenth century. Dafydd's own experience as a child and young man must have included an appreciation of nature's attempts to recover the lost woodlands. Edward I had used his household knights to oversee the woodsmen who were engaged in cutting routes through Welsh forests.¹⁰¹ But rather than destroy the forest, Dafydd's knight regenerates it. He brings his own chains, but they are chains of vigorous greenery.

It would be easy to read the poem as an attack on English oppression, and the winter month in the second part of the poem, castigated for its '[g]wladeiddrwydd' ('discourtesy'), has much in common with other depictions of Englishness in Dafydd's poetry.¹⁰² But that risks oversimplifying the complexities of social relations in fourteenth-century Wales, and the nuances of a poet such as Dafydd, who was himself born into 'a family of traitors', to use R. M. Jones's playful term, and who, as a wandering poet, may well have benefited from the roads built by English axemen.¹⁰³ The poem certainly is an expression of confidence in temporal beauty that is encapsulated by a figure whom we may associate with the *uchelwyr*, the native Welshmen of freeborn stock who, even as they served as officials for the English Crown and Marcher lords, formed the audience for Dafydd's poetry.¹⁰⁴ Gruffudd ab yr Ynad Coch's *englyn* to the felling of trees at Aber was indicative of a loss of confidence and status amongst the Welsh literati. Dafydd's poem to 'May and November', with its reclaiming of woodlands and the greening of the highways, is the opposite.

Conclusions

It is true to say that Welsh roadways have been the subject of relatively few detailed studies. Yet as early as 1933 the historian R. T. Jenkins published a short book for children called *Y Ffordd Yng Nghymru* ('The Road in Wales').¹⁰⁵ Based on materials that had first appeared in the children's magazines *Cymru'r Plant* and *Capten*, the book is in effect a history of Wales before the coming of the railways, which is given its narrative force by a consideration of the development of Welsh roadways. It soon achieved the status of a minor classic, and it has been claimed that 'it would be

difficult to find a better introduction to the history of Wales'.¹⁰⁶ Jenkins in fact foresaw some of the themes of this chapter, including the place of roads in the Laws of Hywel (and English influence thereon) and Edward I's road building, in the wars against Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.¹⁰⁷ He also considered the aesthetics of roads, noting that every new road is an unpleasant sight before Nature's hand can hide the worst of the scarring.¹⁰⁸ For Jenkins, though, the roads were overwhelmingly a force for good: a road's work was to 'bring the regions of Wales closer together, and to make us all better Welsh people as we are now able to know every corner of our country'.¹⁰⁹

Jenkins's claim that roads have long played a part in nation building (as opposed to merely integrating Wales ever more closely with England) has a relevance to medieval Wales. Traditionally, this has been seen as a period during which Roman roads gradually fell into disrepair and the art of road building was forgotten. Recent work on the Monks' Trod is causing a reappraisal of that view, and it may be that further archaeological discoveries will show that road building was more of an integral part of Welsh economic and political life than has hitherto been suspected.¹¹⁰ It is certainly the case that roads had a place in the medieval Welsh imagination. Roman roads were well known, and their significance was being reimagined during the thirteenth century. The legal relationship between a ruler and his roads was also being rethought at much the same time, again with a view to political and economic considerations. Edward I's conquest of Wales was built on the foundations of newly built roads cut through the territories of the native princes. That these roads scarred the landscape is clear, but they also left their mark on the poets who had to come to terms with the fundamental changes in society that occurred at the end of the thirteenth century. But roads were not an inevitable marker of conquest and loss. It is typical of the easy confidence of a poet such as Dafydd ap Gwilym that in revisiting the ruptures of the past he is able to celebrate the creative impulses of his own society.

Notes

- 1 Walter Davies, *General View of the Agriculture and Domestic Economy of South Wales; containing the Counties of Brecon, Caermarthen, Cardigan, Glamorgan, Pembroke, Radnor*, 2 vols (London: Sherwood, Needly and Jones, 1813–15), vol. 2, p. 367.

- 2 The most recent study of Welsh roadways is Richard Moore-Colyer, *Roads and Trackways of Wales* (Ashbourne: Moorland, 2007). On the pre-turnpike roads, see p. 79.
- 3 E. G. Bowen, 'Communications', in E. G. Bowen (ed.), *Wales: A Physical, Historical and Regional Geography* (London: Methuen, 1957), pp. 220–9 (p. 220).
- 4 Shawna Lichtenwalner, *Claiming Cambria: Invoking the Welsh in the Romantic Era* (Cranbury, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 2008), pp. 94–5.
- 5 *Brut y Tywysogyon, or The Chronicle of the Princes: Red Book of Hergest Version*, ed. and trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955), pp. 146 and 147; John D. Hosler, 'Henry II's military campaigns in Wales, 1157 and 1165', *Journal of Medieval Military History*, 2 (2004), 53–71 (p. 70).
- 6 J. E. Lloyd, *Carnarvonshire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), p. 127.
- 7 Philip Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class: The Glamorgan Gentry 1640–1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 7. See also Philip Jenkins, 'The roads of early modern Glamorgan', *Transactions of the Port Talbot Historical Society*, 3:2 (1981), 92–101.
- 8 On colonialism in English writing about Wales in this period, see in particular Moira Dearnley, *Distant Fields: Eighteenth-Century Fictions of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001).
- 9 Heather James, 'The geography of the cult of St. David: a study of dedication patterns in the medieval diocese', in J. Wyn Evans and Jonathan M. Wooding (eds), *St David of Wales: Cult, Church and Nation* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), pp. 41–83 (p. 82).
- 10 Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales / The Description of Wales*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin, 1978).
- 11 R. R. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence and Change: Wales 1063–1415* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 144.
- 12 *Episcopal Acts and Cognate Documents Relating to Welsh Dioceses 1066–1272*, ed. James Conway Davies, 2 vols (Cardiff: Historical Society of the Church in Wales, 1946), vol. 1, p. 406; also *Calendar of Close Rolls, Henry III*, vol. 13: 1264–68, ed. A. E. Stamp (London: H.M.S.O., 1937), p. 95.
- 13 Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence and Change*, p. 144.
- 14 R. R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 5–34.
- 15 Ralph A. Griffiths, 'Travelling between England and Wales: the itinerary of Sir Edward Don in 1524', *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary*, 40 (2004), 5–12 (p. 10).
- 16 *The Itinerary in Wales of John Leland in or about 1536–1539*, ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith (London: G. Bell, 1906). Leland often refers to bridges of either wood or stone.

- 17 *Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi*, ed. Dafydd R. Johnston (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1995), pp. ix–xv.
- 18 Barry J. Lewis, ‘Genre and the praise of place in late medieval Wales’, in S. Zimmer (ed.), *Kelten am Rhein: Akten des dreizehnten Internationalen Keltologiekongresses*, vol. 2: *Philologie* (Mainz am Rhein, 2009), pp. 147–58 (p. 150).
- 19 For an edition and study of poems about overflowing rivers and similar hazards, see *Astudiaeth o Fywyd a Gwaith Siâms Dwinn (c. 1570–c. 1660): Cywyddwr o Fetws Cedewain yn Sir Drefaldwyn*, ed. Dafydd Huw Evans, 4 vols (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), vol. 1.
- 20 *Gwaith Madog Dwygraig*, ed. Huw M. Edwards (Aberystwyth: Canolfan Uwchefrydiau Cymreig a Cheltaidd Prifysgol Cymru, 2006), p. 20 (3.68). Translations into English in this chapter are mine, unless otherwise noted. The form *fyneigiaid* is a mutation of *myneigiaid*, plural of *myneigiad* ‘one who shows/indicates’; see *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru: A Dictionary of the Welsh Language* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1950–2002), p. 2,537. For the hiring of guides by Sir Edward Don for his journey of 1524, see Griffiths, ‘Travelling between England and Wales’, pp. 7 and 10.
- 21 The words discussed here are all found in *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*.
- 22 O. J. Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, English Place-Name Society 56–7 (Nottingham: English Place-Name Society, 1985), p. 99.
- 23 K. E. Jermy and A. Breeze, ‘Welsh *ffordd* (“road”) in English place-names, particularly as an indicator of a Roman road’, *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and History Society*, 75 (2000), 109–10.
- 24 On Welsh borrowings from Latin, see Henry Lewis, *Yr Elfen Ladin yn yr Iaith Gymraeg* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1943).
- 25 On *ystrad*, see *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, s.v. There are some examples of the secondary meaning ‘street’ (earliest example c. 1400), which are explained as being due to the influence of Latin *strata*. The forms *ystrad* and *strata* probably share a common origin.
- 26 On *ôl*, see G. O. Pierce, ‘The evidence of place names’, in Hubert N. Savory (ed.), *Glamorgan County History*, vol. 2: *Early Glamorgan* (Cardiff: Glamorgan County History Trust, 1984), pp. 456–92 (pp. 462–3). On *sarn*, see Melville Richards, ‘Welsh *sarn* “road, cause-way” in place-names’, *Études Celtiques*, 11:2 (1966–7), 383–408.
- 27 C. T. Flower (ed.), *Public Works in Medieval Law*, 2 vols, *Publications of the Selden Society* 32 and 40 (London: Quaritch, 1915 and 1923), vol. 2, p. xvi.
- 28 David Harrison, *The Bridges of Medieval England: Transport and Society 400–1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), pp. 222–3.
- 29 David H. Williams, *The Welsh Cistercians* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2001), pp. 194–5.
- 30 Andrew Fleming, ‘The making of a medieval road: the Monks’ Trod routeway, Mid Wales’, *Landscapes*, 1 (2009), 77–100.

- 31 Fleming, 'The making of a medieval road', p. 77.
- 32 Fleming, 'The making of a medieval road', p. 96. Cf. R. Oram's reference to road building by the Cistercians in North Yorkshire at around the same time: in [Chapter 13](#) in this volume, 'Trackless, impenetrable and underdeveloped? Roads, colonization and environmental transformation in the Anglo-Scottish border zone c. 1100 to c. 1300', pp. 303–25.
- 33 Fleming, 'The making of a medieval road', p. 81.
- 34 *Calendar of Patent Rolls of the Reign of Edward I*, 4 vols (London: H.M.S.O., 1893–1901), vol. 3 (1292–1301), p. 499; Fleming, 'The making of a medieval road', p. 83.
- 35 Fleming, 'The making of a medieval road', p. 83.
- 36 For full-length studies of these two rulers, see Roger Turvey, *The Lord Rhys: Prince of Deheubarth* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1997), and *Llywelyn the Great: Prince of Gwynedd* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 2007).
- 37 Fleming, 'The making of a medieval road', p. 96.
- 38 Gwynfardd Brycheiniog's work is edited by M. E. Owen, 'Gwaith Gwynfardd Brycheiniog', in Kathleen Anne Bramley et al. (eds), *Gwaith Llywelyn Fardd I ac Eraill o Feirdd y Ddeuddegfed Ganrif* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1994), pp. 415–91. On the dating of the poems, see pp. 438 and 423, where it is suggested that the eulogy to the Lord Rhys may have been composed for the Cardigan 'eisteddfod' of 1176. On this poem see also Nerys Ann Jones, 'Canu Mawl Beirdd y Tywysogion i'r Arglwydd Rhys', in Nerys Ann Jones and Huw Pryce (eds), *Yr Arglwydd Rhys* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1996), pp. 129–44 and the edition and modern Welsh paraphrase of the poem, pp. 180–3. Cwm-hir was probably founded in 1176, so if Gwynfardd was influenced by road building relating to the abbey then the poem to Rhys was probably composed later than 1176.
- 39 Owen (ed.), 'Gwaith Gwynfardd Brycheiniog', p. 426 (25.26), with a modern Welsh paraphrase on p. 430.
- 40 Dylan Foster Evans, 'Castle and town in medieval Wales', in Helen Fulton (ed.), *Urban Culture in Medieval Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), pp. 183–204 (pp. 185–6).
- 41 *Gwaith Llywarch ap Llywelyn 'Prydydd y Moch'*, ed. Elin M. Jones with Nerys Ann Jones (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1991), p. 214 (23.48). See also the note on the line on p. 231. Note that the related noun *sarn* can mean 'person, place, or thing trampled underfoot', see *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* s.v.
- 42 Owen (ed.), 'Gwaith Gwynfardd Brycheiniog', p. 426 (25.23–8), with a modern Welsh paraphrase on p. 430. As noted by the editor, line 25 is difficult to interpret. It may be based on the idea that a *gwasgordd* ('retinue' or 'warband') would normally be expected to disperse after a certain amount of time.
- 43 For English texts of the laws, see *The Law of Hywel Dda: Law Texts from Medieval Wales*, ed. Dafydd Jenkins, 2nd edn (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1990).

- 44 Andrew Fleming has noted the relevance of this material in his most recent study, 'Horses, elites ... and long-distance roads', *Landscapes*, 11:2 (2010), 1–20 (10–11).
- 45 *The Law of Hywel Dda*, p. 128 (Llyfr Iorwerth). On roads as boundaries, cf. [Chapter 13](#) of this volume, Oram, 'Trackless, impenetrable and underdeveloped?', pp. 303–25.
- 46 *The Law of Hywel Dda*, p. 186 (Llyfr Damweiniau). A similar section of Llyfr Cyfnerth addresses the situation where a beast in the king's forest is shot from the road.
- 47 Huw Pryce, 'Lawbooks and literacy in medieval Wales', *Speculum*, 75:1 (2000), 29–67 (38–9).
- 48 *The Legal Triads of Medieval Wales*, ed. Sara Elin Roberts (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 73 (Welsh text on p. 72).
- 49 Alan Cooper, 'The king's four highways: legal fiction meets fictional law', *Journal of Medieval History*, 26:4 (2000), 351–70 (352).
- 50 Cooper, 'The king's four highways', 357.
- 51 Cooper, 'The king's four highways', 358.
- 52 Cooper, 'The king's four highways', 365.
- 53 For a Welsh translation of Geoffrey's section on Dyfnwal, see Henry Lewis (ed.), *Brut Dingestow* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1942), p. 33. On Dyfnwal's place in the Welsh legal tradition, see Morfydd E. Owen, 'Royal propaganda: stories from the law-texts', in T. M. Charles-Edwards, Morfydd E. Owen and Paul Russell (eds), *The Welsh King and his Court* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), pp. 224–54 (pp. 229–32).
- 54 *The Acts of the Welsh Rulers, 1120–1283*, ed. Huw Pryce (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), pp. 351 and 365.
- 55 *The Acts of the Welsh Rulers, 1120–1283*, pp. 357–63.
- 56 On the relationship between medieval Welsh and Classical literature, see Ceri Davies, *Welsh Literature and the Classical Tradition* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), pp. 5–52.
- 57 Raymond Howell, 'The demolition of the Roman tetrapylon at Caerleon: an erasure of memory', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 19:4 (2000), 387–95. Cf. Oram's comments on surviving Roman infrastructure: 'the medieval successor states that grew and contended for the domination of Britain used this legacy of Rome for state building', [Chapter 13](#), 'Trackless, impenetrable and underdeveloped?', pp. 303–25.
- 58 *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic*, ed. Brynley F. Roberts (Dublin: School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2005).
- 59 *The Mabinogion*, trans. Sioned Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 108; for the original see *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic*, p. 8.
- 60 See Morris Marples, *Sarn Helen: A Roman Road in Wales* (Newtown: Welsh Outlook Press, 1939).
- 61 *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic*, p. lxxxi.
- 62 On the strengths and weaknesses of this approach to dating medieval Welsh prose, see Simon Rodway, *Dating Medieval Welsh*

- Literature: Evidence from the Verbal System* (Aberystwyth: CMCS, 2013), pp. 7–9.
- 63 Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence and Change*, p. 51; Hosler, 'Henry II's military campaigns in Wales', pp. 63–7.
 - 64 *Brut y Tywysogyon*, pp. 146 and 147.
 - 65 *Calendar of Patent Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, 6 vols (London: H.M.S.O., 1901–13), vol. 1, pp. 414 and 424.
 - 66 *The Acts of the Welsh Rulers*, pp. 503 and 510.
 - 67 William Linnard, *Welsh Woods and Forests: A History* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 2000), p. 29; John E. Morris, *The Welsh Wars of Edward I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), p. 129–30.
 - 68 Morris, *Welsh Wars of Edward I*, p. 139.
 - 69 *Calendar of Various Chancery Rolls: Supplementary Close Rolls, Welsh Rolls, Scutage Rolls 1277–1326* (London: H.M.S.O., 1912), p. 173.
 - 70 *Calendar of ... Welsh Rolls*, pp. 171 and 184–5.
 - 71 *Calendar of ... Welsh Rolls*, pp. 251 and 277.
 - 72 *Calendar of ... Welsh Rolls*, p. 274.
 - 73 *The Statutes of the Realm: From Original Records 1101–1713*, ed. A. Luders, Sir T. Edlyn Tomlins, J. France, W. E. Tauton and J. Raithby, 12 vols (London: Eyre and Strahan, 1810–28), vol. 1, p. 57.
 - 74 *Calendar of Ancient Correspondence Concerning Wales*, ed. J. Goronwy Edwards (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1935), pp. 135–6.
 - 75 *Calendar of ... Welsh Rolls*, pp. 313–14 and 318–19.
 - 76 Linnard, *Welsh Woods and Forests*, p. 32.
 - 77 Linnard, *Welsh Woods and Forests*, p. 29.
 - 78 Michael Prestwich, *War, Politics and Finance under Edward I* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 1972), p. 110.
 - 79 Daniel Birkholz, *The King's Two Maps: Cartography and Culture in Thirteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 113. See also Nick Millea, 'The Gough map: Britain's oldest road map or statement of empire?', in Robert Bork and Andrea Kann (eds), *The Art, Science, and Technology of Medieval Travel* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 143–56.
 - 80 Birkholz, *The King's Two Maps*, p. 141. Birkholz argues for a direct relationship between the design of the Welsh part of the map and the conquest of 1282–3; see p. 116.
 - 81 *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower in Latin and English*, gen. ed. D. E. R. Watt, 9 vols (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987–98), vol. 8, pp. 98–101 (p. 99). Bower's 'Penvyn' stands for Welsh 'Penwyn', who may be identified with Iorwerth Penwyn ap Cynwrig, an historical figure whose alleged treachery was remembered in Wales and whom I intend to discuss elsewhere.
 - 82 G. W. S. Barrow, 'Wales and Scotland in the Middle Ages', *Welsh History Review*, 10:3 (1981), 302–19 (316–17).
 - 83 *Gwaith Bleddyn Fardd a Beirdd Eraill Ail Hanner y Drydedd Ganrif ar Ddeg*, ed. Rhian M. Andrews et al. (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru,

- 1996), p. 421 (36.64) (the poem is edited by Andrews). Translation from Joseph P. Clancy (trans.), *Medieval Welsh Poems* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), p. 173.
- 84 *Gwaith Bleddyn Fardd*, ed. Andrews et al., p. 436. See also *Gwaith Einion Offeiriad a Dafydd Ddu o Hiraddug*, ed. R. G. Gruffydd and Rhiannon Ifans (Aberystwyth: Canolfan Uwchefrydiau Cymreig a Cheltaidd Prifysgol Cymru, 1997), p. 169.
- 85 *Annales monastici*, vol. 3: *Annales prioratus de Dunstaplia, A.D. 1–1297*, ed. Henry Richards Luard, Rolls Series 36 (London: Longman, Green, 1866), p. 291; Anthony David Carr, ‘“The last and weakest of his line”: Dafydd ap Gruffudd, Prince of Wales’, *Welsh History Review*, 19:3 (1999), 375–99 (397).
- 86 On Dafydd’s references to his physical environment, see Gerald Morgan, ‘The landscape of Dafydd ap Gwilym’, *Welsh and Breton Studies in Memory of Th. M. Chotzen: Proceedings of a Colloquium organized by The A. G. van Hamel Foundation for Celtic Studies, Utrecht – Amsterdam, 23–4 April 1993* (Utrecht: Celtic Dragon, 1995), pp. 27–35. It is noteworthy that the poets of the fourteenth century often compare their own craft to that of the carpenter, see Morgan T. Davies, ‘“Aed i’r coed i dorri cof”: Dafydd ap Gwilym and the metaphors of carpentry’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 30 (1995), 67–85.
- 87 Helen Fulton, *Dafydd ap Gwilym and the European Context* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1989), pp. 170–1.
- 88 Gerald of Wales, *The Description of Wales*, p. 269.
- 89 Gerald of Wales, *The Description of Wales*, pp. 267–8.
- 90 On the military significance of Welsh woodlands, see Linnard, *Welsh Woods and Forests*, pp. 27–35.
- 91 On the importance of woods and forests to Welsh society in Dafydd’s period, see William Rees, *South Wales and the March, 1284–1415: A Social and Agrarian Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), pp. 109–28; R. R. Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales 1284–1400* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 119–29; Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr*, pp. 21–2; Linnard, *Welsh Woods and Forests*, pp. 36–51; D. J. Bowen, ‘Dafydd ap Gwilym a Cheredigion’, *Llên Cymru*, 14:3/4 (1983–4), 163–209 (p. 201).
- 92 Davies, *Lordship and Society*, p. 126.
- 93 ‘Mis Mai a Mis Tachwedd’ is the title in Welsh. Until the most recent edition (see note 83) it was known as ‘Mis Mai a Mis Ionawr’ (‘May and January’). The winter month is not named in the poem itself other than as ‘[y] mis du dig’ (‘the nasty black month’).
- 94 *Cerddi Dafydd ap Gwilym*, ed. Dafydd Johnston (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 2010), p. 144 (33.1–12). The translation, also by Johnston, is taken from the website Dafydd ap Gwilym, Welsh Department, Swansea University, www.dafyddapgwilym.net. Accessed 12 July 2015.

- 95 The term 'marchog' literally means a horseman, but by Dafydd's day could also mean a knight. On the concept of knighthood in fourteenth-century Wales, see Adam Chapman, 'Rebels, *uchelwyr* and parvenus: Welsh knights in the fourteenth century', in Adrian R. Bell et al. (eds), *The Soldier Experience in the Fourteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2011), pp. 145–56.
- 96 Huw M. Edwards, *Dafydd ap Gwilym: Influences and Analogues* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 276–8. See also A. T. E. Matonis, 'Some rhetorical topics in the Cywyddwyr', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 28:1 (1978), 47–60.
- 97 M. P. Bryant-Quinn, 'Marchog Mai', *Llên Cymru*, 22 (1999), 128–30.
- 98 Émile Mâle, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century*, trans. Dora Nussey (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 72.
- 99 Letter dated 9 October 1694, in *The Works of Henry Vaughan*, ed. L. C. Martin, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 696.
- 100 *Cerddi Dafydd ap Gwilym*, p. 144 (33.13–20). The translation, also by Johnston, is taken from www.dafyddapgwilym.net. Accessed 12 July 2015.
- 101 Prestwich, *War, Politics and Finance*, p. 111.
- 102 *Cerddi Dafydd ap Gwilym*, p. 146 (33.44). On the English in Dafydd's poetry, see Helen Fulton, 'Class and nation: defining the English in late-medieval Welsh poetry', in Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (eds), *Authority and Subjugation in Writing of Medieval Wales* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 191–212 (pp. 195–6).
- 103 R. M. Jones, *Ysbryd y Cwlm: Delwedd y Genedl yn ein Llenyddiaeth* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1998), p. 123 ('[t]eulu o fradwyr'). Dafydd's family had a long history of service to the English Crown and Marcher lords.
- 104 On this apparent, but false, dichotomy, see Rachel Bromwich, *Aspects of the Poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1986), pp. 13–14.
- 105 R. T. Jenkins, *Y Ffordd yng Nghymru* (Wrecsam: Hughes A'i Fab, 1933).
- 106 J. G. Williams, 'Robert Thomas Jenkins', in R. T. Jenkins, E. D. Jones and Brynley F. Roberts (eds), *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography 1941–1970* (London: Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 2001), pp. 111–12 (p. 111).
- 107 Jenkins, *Y Ffordd yng Nghymru*, pp. 36 and 38–9.
- 108 Jenkins, *Y Ffordd yng Nghymru*, p. 156.
- 109 Jenkins, *Y Ffordd yng Nghymru*, p. 156: 'dwyn ardaloedd Cymru'n nes at ei gilydd, a'n gwneuthur ninnau bawb yn well Cymry am inni bellach allu adnabod pob cwr o'n gwlad'.
- 110 As suggested by Fleming, 'Horses, elites ... and long-distance roads', pp. 1–20.

Trackless, impenetrable and
underdeveloped? Roads, colonization
and environmental transformation
in the Anglo-Scottish border zone,
c. 1100 to c. 1300

Richard Oram

Roads exercise a powerful hold upon human imagination. The place occupied by roads and travel upon them in popular literature and music is testimony to their symbolic roles as both unifiers and dividers with which they have been endowed. Perhaps more than any other cultural icon they have become identified with the transformative impact of humanity upon the environment through which we move, symbols of mastery over that environment, and of our ability to reshape it to suit our needs. The presence of a road subtly alters perceptions of the land it traverses; it is no longer a trackless wilderness, untamed and perilous, but a modified commodity to be consumed at leisure as we pass through it in air-conditioned comfort. It is as that signifier of human mastery and economic development that this chapter approaches the road system that evolved in the Anglo-Scottish border zone in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Past studies of the road network in this region have focused on its antiquity, emphasizing its origins in the Roman military system that was laid out in the first and second centuries CE, but have given a sense – more implicit in the discussion than articulated explicitly – of the immutability of that ancient system and of the absence of development of new routes beyond its basic pattern throughout the medieval period. The regional road network inherited from the Roman past has continued to be seen as fulfilling the same function as it held in the empire's heyday – as a control mechanism through which the military might of Rome was deployed – becoming the invasion routes for armies of Angles, Britons and Scandinavians and their Scottish and English successors. Only rarely has the roads' importance as conduits of trade, for the peaceful movement of people and the dissemination of their ideas entered the

discussion. While this study will begin with that same Roman baseline, it seeks to move beyond its limiting hold on past scholarship to explore other dimensions of its transformative impact upon human settlement within the study area and upon the environment of the region as the network delivered new waves of colonists into it, encouraged the more intensive exploitation of the freshly settled lands and eased the export of their surplus resources. Within that discussion it will offer a vision of the road system as more than simply arteries along which people and produce flowed but also of the function of those arteries as lines of division that broke the country up into political, social and economic units. As the regional political structures became more complex, settlement distribution became denser and issues of legal ownership more strictly defined, the road system ramified and grew, breaking the face of the land into smaller and smaller parcels and penetrating at an ever more localized level. On the spreadsheet of cost-benefit effects of that intensification, past emphasis has been on the undoubted positive socio-economic consequences, articulated most clearly in the language of state building that has for so long dominated the historiography. This chapter, however, concludes with an evaluation of the environmental impact of that development, a development that was for the most part severely detrimental to the landscape and which was the unfortunate legacy of the expansion of the road system that was central to the socio-economic fabric of the medieval English and Scottish states.

Lines of terrestrial communication have probably existed for almost as long as the clusters of human settlement and areas of exploitable resource that they connect. Some were simply created through the wear of regular footfall along lines of least resistance in the natural topography, channelled through passes between hills or to the easiest fording points of waterways, or following ridge lines that rose above marshy or wooded valley floors. Others, however, like the trackways that traversed the fens of Lincolnshire and East Anglia, or the watery landscape of the Somerset Levels, were built structures with wooden walkways that lifted their users clear of the mud and the deep channels that snaked through the reed beds and scrub.¹ Their construction speaks of a level of organization where labour could be marshalled regularly and in numbers, something that belies the popular image of the primitiveness of prehistoric societies. In comparison with the system of roads that came into being in the century after the Roman invasion began in 43 ce, however, the communications network of Iron Age Britain

appears to have been rudimentary at best and had emerged largely to serve local needs.

The Roman system transformed terrestrial communications, creating a planned network of major arterial routes that linked the principal urban centres of the province(s) established in Great Britain by the conquerors. These routes connected urban hinterlands to market centres at home and, via the new ports, to the wider road network of the empire in western mainland Europe; linked governmental centres to the heavily policed and militarized frontier zones; and carried the armoured fist of Roman military power far beyond the 'hard' political frontiers formed by the defensive systems of forts, walls and signal towers that separated the Roman 'us' from the barbarian 'them' into territories that were dominated, that is, subject to the political, economic and cultural influences of the neighbouring power whilst remaining notionally independent, rather than conquered, that is brought under the direct control of a foreign invader who imposed their culture and traditions on the indigenous population.² Long after the might of the empire had faded and the Romanized provinces of Britain had fallen prey to new waves of conquerors, the roads remained as a tangible reminder to the rulers of the petty kingdoms that rose in the wake of Rome of the former existence of a greater and more unified whole. In the centuries that followed, the medieval successor states that grew and contended for the domination of Britain used this legacy of Rome as a tool for state building.

Part of the traditional nineteenth- to later twentieth-century historical narratives of state building in Britain in the Middle Ages saw a tendency in any discussion of roads to focus on their function as media for communication; they were arteries that carried armies or commercial traffic around the land and linked up the regions from which were built the kingdoms that emerged from the post-Roman political reordering.³ In explorations of the survival of the Roman network as the basis of the medieval road systems of England and southern Scotland, that network was most commonly presented as providing corridors that made easy the deep penetration of some regions by raiders and invaders; an absence of roads, conversely, gave a territory an increased immunity to large-scale attack. More recently, however, the non-military dimensions of invasion have begun to be stressed, especially the significance of roads as avenues that encouraged colonial movement of peoples, easing the entry of new populations into regions where the existing level of settlement was thinly spread and the economic potential of

the natural resources present was exploited on a relatively light and irregular basis.

Within this new discussion, although historians and archaeologists have recognized a second function that roads played in the Middle Ages: as boundary lines between political, ecclesiastical and economic units, which defined zones of settlement, separated areas of intensive resource exploitation from more economically marginal districts, but most fundamentally which carved up areas into 'this is mine, that's yours' blocks. Neither the antiquity of that function nor, more importantly, the processes that stimulated its emergence have been analysed in any detail. While scholars concerned with 'big picture' social, political or economic narratives have often displayed a striking blindness to the significant liminal role of road lines, however, the coincidence between roadways and parish boundaries in parts of England has long been recognized by local historians.⁴ With many parishes crystallizing between the eighth and later tenth centuries into defined entities for the purposes of collecting tithes, it is likely that the routeways that marked parts of their limits were already well-established features of the human landscape and probably at least Roman in origin. Since a number of parishes appear to have evolved from pre-existing secular land divisions, the use of roads as boundary features probably represented a continuity of practice from no later than the seventh century, if not from the late Roman period. In Scotland, where the infrastructure of the Roman civil province never developed and where the Roman military road network did not expand much beyond the major arterial routes laid down in the first and second centuries ce,⁵ there is more limited evidence for similar trends in the use of roads as political boundaries. Unlike in England, moreover, Scotland's process of parish formation began significantly later and the medieval pattern of ecclesiastical districts only began to crystallize between c. 1150 and c. 1250. Nevertheless, as discussed below, there are several identifiable instances where the Roman roads through the southern uplands were utilized as boundaries for the large territorial units that made up the landed estates of the kings, their secular and ecclesiastical magnates, and of monasteries, and also smaller landholdings occupied by lesser nobles and free peasants before the twelfth century. In many cases these territorial units provided the local framework upon which the parish system was founded. Although the evidence is more ephemeral than in southern England, it is still possible to reconstruct the process in some detail from the fragments that remain.

Roads provided the main communications network of the Roman empire and formed a complex akin to a human nervous system by which the centres of imperial government were linked to the provinces, which were thereby made responsive to the needs of the greater physical entity of the empire. Towards the imperial *limes*, however, roads fulfilled additional functions as the defining lines that gave coherence to the deep frontier zones maintained along the landward boundaries of the empire. Before Hadrian constructed his famous wall across the Tyne–Solway isthmus in the 120s, for example, a frontier line on a similar course was defined by the roadway and associated forts known as the Stanegate, which runs parallel with Hadrian's Wall, a few miles south of it.⁶ It was certainly far from being an impermeable barrier but it provided a means of policing movement north and south through a still hostile region, permitting rapid deployment of military manpower at times of threat, and, very importantly, monitoring commercial activity across the frontier zone. As Roman power became more sedentary in the second century and as military objectives moved from conquest of all of mainland Britain to enhanced control of the economically more developed south and regulation of the trade of, and containment of any threat from, the territories beyond that zone, the empire's boundaries became more rigid and acquired linear structure, as in the Hadrianic and Antonine walls; roads became a component part of such systems rather than constituting the main feature of the frontier.⁷

The recorded use of a road as a line of demarcation between polities emerges powerfully in the later ninth century in the treaty between King Alfred the Great and the Danish ruler Guthrum. By this agreement in c. 886 England was divided into zones controlled by the kings of Wessex and the Scandinavian invaders – the region that came to be known as the Danelaw – to either side of a frontier that ran for the most part along the old Roman road known as Watling Street.⁸ This route, starting at Richborough in Kent and then running north-west from the Thames crossing at London through St Albans, Dunstable, Towcester and ending at Wroxeter in Shropshire, had been one of the main lines of Roman military penetration in the first century ce along which the invaders pushed through the Midlands and into the northern parts of Wales. It became one of the first major roadways to be properly engineered in the wake of the initial campaigns and soon established itself as the principal route that linked the south-eastern and north-western parts of the new province of Britannia. Eight

centuries later it remained as a highly visible component of the built environment of Anglo-Saxon England and a major economic artery bisecting the kingdom of Mercia and linking the western Midlands with London, which was already established as the chief commercial centre of southern Britain.

There may have been more significance in the selection of Watling Street as a frontier line than the obvious geographical convenience of its course. The physical characteristics of Roman road construction meant that the major routes through the level parts of the countryside formed upstanding structures or causeways raised some distance above the level of the ground they traversed. More important, perhaps, was the 'road-zone' that extended beyond the actual carriageway on both sides, defined by parallel ditches.⁹ The strip to either side of the carriageway was kept free of vegetation in Roman times, possibly to form a 'parking' area to keep the road itself clear but more probably originally intended to clear cover that could be used by brigands or ambushers, or as concealment for animal predators. It is perhaps unlikely that the Romano-British and early Anglo-Saxon successor states that inherited the Roman road system at first possessed the level of organization necessary to maintain the clearance of the 'road-zone' but the emergence by the eighth century of obligations imposed by Anglo-Saxon kings on their free subjects to maintain bridges and fortifications – the so-called *trinoda necessitas* – perhaps saw a formal reintroduction of such a duty.¹⁰ Certainly, as the great engineering achievement of Offa's Dyke demonstrates, by the later eighth century the greater Anglo-Saxon kingdoms possessed both the administrative structures and legal mechanisms of coercive power to marshal the resources necessary for the construction and maintenance of public works on a scale comparable to that achieved in the heyday of Roman power.

As the English state emerged in the tenth century, roads became established in law as directly under royal oversight and travellers upon them became subject to the special protection afforded by the king's peace, fixing them as 'the king's highways' in popular and legal tradition.¹¹ Maintenance of the roads themselves is not stipulated in the early law codes but the specific reference to technically more difficult and expensive bridge repair duties offers circumstantial evidence that the maintenance of the communications network in general was an obligation imposed by kings on their subjects. Given the concerns displayed in law codes to ensure the safety of road users, it is likely that the clearance of 'road-zones' bordering

the carriageways was an aspect of that obligation. If this was the case, then perhaps we should visualize the roads in the districts away from the main centres of population and intensive agriculture as running through cleared strips in woodland and scrubland, much like the remoter stretches of the modern 49th Parallel borderline between Canada and the USA. As a linear feature traversing the landscape and bordered by a broad strip of cleared land, the use of Watling Street as a border line becomes more clearly understandable to a modern observer.

North of the Humber there is only circumstantial evidence for the widespread use of roads in this way as frontier markers between polities in the seventh- to ninth-century apogee of the kingdom of Northumbria. That state was created in the mid-seventh century through the violent union of two smaller rival kingdoms established by Angles, one of the groups of Germanic peoples who settled in eastern Britain at the end of the Roman period. The northern kingdom of Bernicia was centred on Northumberland and the East Lothian plain, while the southern realm, Deira, was based in York.¹² When these two states were united in the mid-seventh century, they formed a single state that extended from the Humber estuary in the south to the Firth of Forth in the north. Roads had not formed significant boundaries between them, or between them and their neighbours, but within this region the Roman road network functioned as a nexus that facilitated the spread of Anglian political and, subsequently, ecclesiastical power, provided lines of penetration along which settlers moved, and formed a framework around which many of the local political, social and economic structures of the region were rebuilt in the Middle Ages. By the end of the seventh century, the central axis of Northumbria and one of the chief arterial routes in this network was the road that ran north from York to the Tyne crossing at Corbridge, over Carter Bar to the Tweed crossing at Newstead, then up Lauderdale and over Soutra to Musselburgh and Edinburgh. This road, 'the king's highway which is called *Derestrete*',¹³ constituted a major component in the political geography of the region, perhaps best reflected in the conflicts in 918 fought at Corbridge between the army of Ragnall, the Scandinavian king of York, and a Scottish force led by Castantín, king of Alba, and its probable use as the invasion route used in 1006 when the Scottish king Malcolm II attacked Durham.¹⁴ Corbridge, which stood at the point where Dere Street crossed the River Tyne and where it intersected with the east-west route from Carlisle via Hexham to Newcastle, was itself a highly

strategic and economically significant location. This central significance was underscored during the period of Scottish control of Northumberland from 1138 to 1157, when a mint was established there by Henry, Earl of Northumberland, the son of the Scottish king, to issue the silver pennies (using silver mined first at Alston in Tynedale and later at Blanchland in the Derwent Valley) that circulated in his zone of domination and gave a symbolic representation of the physical reality of his domain.¹⁵

Northumbrian expansion north and west was considerably speeded by control of the old Roman road network. From the northern end of Dere Street, for example, the road continued west through Lothian to the Forth crossing near Stirling and from there north-eastwards to at least the crossing of the River Tay at Perth. This route was probably the medium by which Northumbrian domination of southern Pictland was achieved in the 650s,¹⁶ and possession of this immensely strategic roadway that gave access both into what is now central eastern Scotland and into the Lothian plain became a source of conflict until the kings of the Scots established lasting control over it in the tenth century. Its continued central importance can be seen in the era of the Scottish Wars of Independence in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries; it was along this westwards extension of Dere Street that Edward I of England led his army to victory at Falkirk in 1298 and his son, Edward II, led his army to his defeat at Bannockburn in 1314. Aggressive penetration along the old Roman network was also a major factor in the westward spread of Northumbrian power from Deira and southern Bernicia. In this, Stanegate and the military road south of Hadrian's Wall was probably of critical importance in early Bernician penetration towards Carlisle and the district around the head of the Solway Firth. Equally important, however, was the route that ran north-west from Catterick up Swaledale and into upper Teesdale, from where it climbed over the Pennines by Stainmore into the district now known as Cumbria.¹⁷ This route came to form a second axis within Northumbria, linking York via Penrith and Carlisle with the north-westernmost extension of the kingdom in Galloway and Kyle in what is now south-west Scotland. Carlisle and Corbridge, then, constituted two nodal points in the network of former Roman roads that connected the major political and ecclesiastical centres of the core territory of the kingdom of Northumbria between the Humber and the Tweed.

Just as these roads had facilitated the creation of the Northumbrian state, so too did they assist in its dissolution in the

ninth and tenth centuries. The western routes, for example, provided conduits along which the kings of Strathclyde were able to extend their territory south across the southern uplands watershed into the valley systems that feed into the head of the Solway Firth. Their domain can be described as the kingdom of the M74, for it was concentrated along the line of the old Roman road that ran north from Carlisle to the central Clyde Valley and the western end of the Antonine frontier now taken by the modern motorway.¹⁸ In the late ninth and tenth centuries, the east–west routes across the Pennines at the southern end of this zone of Strathclyde penetration, particularly the roads connecting York with the Irish Sea coast, gave the Norse Ívarrson kings of Dublin the ability to construct a short-lived domain with the two cities as twin seats of their power.¹⁹ Scottish domination of the northern end of Dere Street likewise speeded the process by which Lothian was detached from the rump of the Northumbrian kingdom that had survived Scandinavian invasion and settlement in the later ninth century, and was absorbed into the territories of the kings of Scots in the course of the tenth and eleventh centuries.

As that process became more firmly secured, a second Roman road began to play a strategic role in the south-westwards expansion of the Scottish kingdom in the later eleventh and twelfth centuries. This road transected the southern uplands from south-west to north-east, diverging from the main road that came north from Carlisle up Annandale and over the hills into Clydesdale, heading instead from Dryfesdale and Eskdale to the valley of the Ettrick and, presumably, joining Dere Street at Newstead.²⁰ It is almost certain that this roadway was the ‘king’s way which goes from the valley of Annan towards Roxburgh’, part of whose eastern end was identified as one boundary of a portion of land given to the monks of Melrose in the second quarter of the thirteenth century.²¹ The exact course of the road is lost in many places, but it is possible that part of it was that described in the early 1120s as ‘the road which comes from the castle to the abbey and the Yarrow Water’ at Selkirk.²² South and west of there, the line of the road passed through some of the most thinly settled and lightly exploited regions of the southern uplands, a zone that by the eleventh century had emerged as a marchland between the Northumbrian territories to its south and east and the kingdom of the Strathclyde Britons to its north and west.²³ Parts of it have been identified on Craik Moor in Dumfriesshire, constructed to the same impressive standards as Dere Street, and there is archaeological and documentary evidence

in this area that the same road alignment was maintained into the medieval period and beyond.²⁴

An important factor that obscured the significance of the old Roman road network in the process of medieval state formation in the Humber–Forth region was the eventual division of the former Northumbrian kingdom into Scottish and English portions and the development of national historiographies that looked largely at cross-border relationships in high political or ecclesiastical terms. Such national historiography drew an artificial line through the shared political, social, cultural and economic experiences of the regions to either side of it and fixed a disjunction in academic considerations of the institutional arrangements and socio-economic infrastructure of the territory; in this tradition, the unity of the region had been broken irretrievably by the disintegration of the Northumbrian realm. More recent historiographical trends, however, have broken down the false intellectual barrier that the later medieval Anglo-Scottish border created and it is now recognized that in the twelfth century almost the whole of Northumbria was reunited under the rule of the Scottish king David I (1124–53).²⁵ The physical spread and maintenance of David's power was enabled by the roads network and the political gravity of his realm was subsequently maintained through the axes provided by that communications system inherited from Rome and Northumbria, principally Dere Street in the east, the Glasgow–Carlisle road in the west and, critically, the route that cut north-east to south-west through the southern uplands. In the period 1138–59, that road connected the two principal seats of his government in Carlisle and Roxburgh and joined the two networks that radiated from them.

To take just Roxburgh, its emergence as a major centre of Scottish royal administration at the start of the reign of David I had been facilitated by its position within an existing roads network. Its growing importance as one of the principal seats of David's government, however, stimulated the rapid development of new routes from other regional centres that converged on the castle and associated burgh.²⁶ For example, the 'king's highway running towards Roxburgh' from near Soutra²⁷ is mentioned in a charter of King Malcolm IV in the early 1160s, but this road, which connected Roxburgh with Edinburgh, Stirling and the northern portion of the kingdom beyond the Forth, linking in to the northern section of Dere Street, had almost certainly emerged during David's reign. Likewise the road from Roxburgh to Jedburgh, again connecting with Dere Street and the route to Corbridge,

constituted an early development designed to strengthen the integration of Northumberland proper with the heartlands of the new Scottish kingdom in Lothian and the south-east. Although the southern sector of this road-linked 'Scoto-Northumbrian realm' was lost to the Scots after 1157, the road network that had provided its unifying structure remained of significance to Scottish and English administrations on either side of the new frontier. In southern Scotland, the Roman road from Annandale to Tweeddale remained the key arterial route in the later twelfth century, linking the three sheriffdom centres and major royal castles at Dumfries, Selkirk and Roxburgh and playing a central part in the consolidation of Scottish royal power in the regions west of Dumfries.

Less dramatically, perhaps, this inherited road network played a key role in the opening up to economic exploitation of a broad swath of country between Redesdale in Northumberland and the Esk Valley in Lothian. As one of the longest and most conspicuous fixed linear landscape features of the region, it was being used by the early twelfth century as a property boundary. In the densely settled districts of central Tweeddale around Makerstoun, Raeshaw and Lessudden in Roxburghshire, for example, it formed long stretches of those estates' perambulated limits.²⁸ Further north in Midlothian, it was named in the 1160s as the western boundary of the 'toun of Gocelin the cook',²⁹ a now lost settlement in the former Newbattle parish south-east of Edinburgh. In the same district at the end of the thirteenth century, simply referred to as 'the King's way', Dere Street was one of two roads that formed parts of the boundary between the lands of the lordship of Cranstoun and the monastic estate of Newbattle.³⁰ Archaeological survey and excavation on the road has revealed the massive scale of its engineering work, exposing a road-zone that, in places, was almost 15m wide.³¹ It is possibly a part of Dere Street followed by *Malcholmisrode* (a route discussed in detail below), which is described as 'the road which goes towards Lauder by the stone causeway'.³² As with the old Roman roads in central England that later functioned as frontiers and property boundaries, it is understandable why such a visible and permanent element in the landscape came to be adopted as a delimiting feature by those who lived alongside it, and acquired similar status to such natural boundary markers as hills and rivers.

In a landscape of dynamic settlement and clearance for agriculture as existed in this Scoto-Northumbrian zone in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the pre-existence of a network of roads or the establishment of accepted routeways eased and accelerated

the processes of development. Roads provided lines of penetration from which developers could push their clearance activities into the land that bordered them. From the fixed point of the road, along which draught animals, carts and equipment could be brought to the targeted areas, fresh assarts (clearings for agriculture made in previously uncultivated ground) could be driven out into the 'waste' (land that was not intensively exploited for agriculture or bearing a settled population) that bordered the already cleared strip along which the routeway ran. Such operations are probably reflected in the 'new road made by the monks' at Hood in North Yorkshire, which was identified in the period *c.* 1174 to 1183 as a boundary between land held and cultivated by the canons of Newburgh Priory and the property of Adam Fossard.³³ This 'new road' seems to have been developed originally by the Cistercian monks who had occupied the site down to 1143 as part of their exploitation of a district of wooded hill country north of Hood before they moved to a new location at Old Byland. It is likely that the 'certain land' that was given by one Gerold to the monks of Kelso in the 1140s, which extended parallel to the northern boundary of the 'toun' (the Scottish term for a small agricultural community), which preceded the later medieval market centre or burgh of Kelso and running back from the road from Kelso to Nenthorn, represented just such a clearance operation.³⁴ On the Bishop of Durham's lands in the second half of the twelfth century, roads were being used in similar fashion as fixed lines from which development moved outwards. Bishop Hugh le Puiset, for example, granted Thorald of London and his heirs waste at Gateshead extending west from the south end of the Tyne Bridge, to which the main road north from Durham ran.³⁵ Likewise, in the early 1170s Bishop Hugh confirmed the possessions of Durham priory's cell at Finchale, including an apparently recently cleared assart that had been made extending westwards from the Durham road to the old-established cultivated ground of the vill (territorial unit comprising a settlement and its associated lands) of Newton.³⁶

Grants to an individual, community or corporation of access through the property of another to reach a specific destination that has been given to the beneficiary – such as a mill lying at a remove from a settlement, or an area of designated grazing or peat-cutting rights – rarely specify the route to be taken or make explicit that there was an established access way. It was, however, in the interest of the holder of the property through which access was granted to reach speedy agreement over an accepted route to avoid damage

to woodland, growing crops or pasture, or potentially expensive legal disputes. In the 1170s, for example, when Hugh le Puiset, Bishop of Durham, granted Ralph Basset 134½ acres of moor and cultivated land in the hilly district around Penshaw between Durham and Sunderland, he also gave Basset a site for a mill on the Herrington Burn outside the limits of the main block of property in Penshaw. To make the award viable, the bishop gave Basset a 'free way (*viam liberam*)' through his episcopal demesne to reach the mill by a specified route, a solution that satisfied both Basset and the bishop's tenants, through whose fields access was being provided and who otherwise faced the threat of damaging encroachment on their growing crops.³⁷

Such private roadways provided convenient internal divisions of a landed property that facilitated processes of subdivision and alienation of portions of land. At Healey in Northumberland, for example, a road and a stream formed the western and eastern limits respectively of a strip of woodland that Roger Bertram, lord of Mitford, granted sometime between 1154 and 1174 to the canons of Brinkburn out of his wider property holding in the district.³⁸ As the landholding pattern became increasingly fragmented and complex in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a hierarchy of lesser routes within formerly large unitary holdings begins to emerge, with paths and ways being given as boundary lines at levels below that of roads. In 1223, for example, Bishop Richard Marsh of Durham confirmed a grant of thirty acres of waste beside Sacristonheugh that had been granted to Geoffrey the tailor and his heirs, identifying 'the path (*semita*) which is between the house [of one Nicholas of Charlau] and the vill of Witton' as part of its boundary.³⁹ This process whereby minor local routeways acquired increasing political and economic significance as boundary lines as the settlement pattern filled in, the face of the land became more heavily worked and individual property holding became subject to increasing legal scrutiny and, therefore, potential challenge, is replicated throughout the region.

A detailed record of the processes through which a district was brought into intensive cultivation within a road-defined framework can be assembled for the area between Lauderdale and Wedale that extends north from the Tweed Valley between St Boswell's and Galashiels. Although this district contains evidence for widespread late prehistoric settlement, it seems to have been largely depopulated in the early medieval period and to have become a zone of extensive resource exploitation (that is, where the resources

of a wide area are relatively lightly used), as opposed to intensive (where there is heavy and regular exploitation concentrated in particular locations) for seasonal grazing, building materials and fuel needs.⁴⁰ By the second quarter of the twelfth century much of the district was designated as a royal hunting reserve, the forest *inter Gala et Leder* (between Gala and Leader).⁴¹ Modern usage equates 'forest' with a large expanse of woodland, but in the Middle Ages the term was applied to areas of land subject to a particular legal regime – designed to protect their value as hunting grounds – that might contain little or no significant blocks of tree cover. In the royal forest between Gala and Leader the Crown and its local officials down to the end of the century at first strove to exclude, then to control through licensing, but at length yielded to, pressure from neighbouring landholders and land-hungry peasants for more intensive and permanent agricultural operation within the forest bounds. From almost as early as we can trace this forest district in the record, however, it appears as a zone of large-scale clearance operations, licit and illicit, with peasant cultivators and monastic estate managers breaking assarts into the hill country between Lauderdale and Wedale.⁴² A key factor behind the progressive erosion of royal hunting interests in the district that these assarts represented was the presence of a series of important roads that penetrated it north–south and east–west. This district may have been classed as 'waste' but, contrary to modern popular perceptions of what that term constitutes, it was certainly not trackless wilderness. Its porosity to traffic rendered it susceptible to a mounting intensification of exploitation as adjoining communities whose inhabitants had traditionally been permitted to find sources of fuel or have limited access to areas of seasonal pasture within it sought to turn those customary but intermittent uses into permanent, legally safeguarded and rigorously exercised rights.

Although the first records of its existence occur in the early thirteenth century, one of the most important north–south routes in the district was that which is still known as the Girthgate.⁴³ This route, described as 'the road which is the division between Wedale and Lauderdale',⁴⁴ appears to have been one of the first medieval roadways running through the wooded upland area between the two river valleys, its name reflecting its probable role as a boundary of the girth or sanctuary area that surrounded the early church site at Stow (a place name derived from the Anglian term for a holy or consecrated place) in Wedale.⁴⁵ It was suggested in the 1940s by R. P. Hardie that this road was the main route between Edinburgh

and the important early royal centre at Selkirk, deviating from Dere Street south of Soutra, and dropping into Wedale to cross the Tweed beyond Galashiels and then join the old Roman route up Ettrickdale.⁴⁶ Probably dating from at least the eleventh century and possibly several centuries earlier, the Girthgate presents some of the clearest evidence for the longevity of usage of a road line as a key boundary marker in the region, with at least one thousand years of continuous significance as an ecclesiastical and political division cutting through the land. Possibly acquiring importance first as a limit to the protected space of the girth of Stow when the region was under Northumbrian domination before the tenth century, in the twelfth century this boundary line came to mark the limits of the adjoining parishes of Stow and Channelkirk and, until local government reorganization in the 1970s, the jurisdictional border between the sheriffdoms of Berwick and Edinburgh. As the limits of the Melrose estate between Gala and Leader gradually crystallized in the course of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, this road line came eventually to form the north-westernmost limit of the complex of grange properties that the abbey had acquired.⁴⁷

There were two other main early north–south routes through this district. The first was Dere Street, which crossed the Tweed beside the major Roman fort site at Newstead just east of Melrose and ran north up Lauderdale and Glengelt to cross the Lammermuir ridge at Soutra. Within Lauderdale proper south of the town of Lauder there is no hard evidence for the line taken by the Roman road, although it is believed to have been close to or on the line followed by the modern A68, which runs along the route of the eighteenth-century turnpike, and there has been considerable debate as to whether or not Dere Street had continued to function in the earlier Middle Ages as a route through this stretch of country.⁴⁸ Part of its course may be represented by the *regia via* (king's highway) mentioned c. 1170 as running south from Lauder, crossing the River Leader at a ford, then heading south-eastwards to Birkenhead on the east side of the valley before joining the road heading via Smailholm to the Tweed crossing at Roxburgh.⁴⁹ The second north–south route was known as 'Malcholmisrode', an alternative to Dere Street, which ran along the ridge some three kilometres west of the River Leader. It is first named as such in 1228 but was in existence at least a century earlier.⁵⁰ It has been suggested that this Malcholmisrode either was Dere Street or, more plausibly, that it had replaced the Roman roadway up the first sixteen kilometres of Lauderdale from the Tweed to the town of

Lauder, north of which the modern road returns to or lies closely parallel with the older Roman line. Certainly, until the construction of the turnpike road from Earlston to Lauder in the 1780s, the line of Malcholmisrode appears to have constituted the main route north through Lauderdale.⁵¹ Nevertheless, the intensity of settlement and the presence of important medieval establishments such as the hospital of St Leonard, founded in the late twelfth century by Richard de Morville, lord of Lauderdale,⁵² on the valley floor in this lower section of Lauderdale, suggests that there was at least a secondary route through this district at an earlier date.

When the line of Malcholmisrode first appears in the records it had already acquired significance as a boundary. West of its line was the core area of forest where the king's foresters were attempting to limit or at least regulate access; east of the road, on the east-facing slopes descending into Lauderdale, exploitation was progressing apace. One of the earliest references to the economic exploitation of the forest area occurs in the expanded version of the foundation charter of Melrose Abbey issued by King David I in c. 1143, some seven years after the monastery's foundation.⁵³ Amongst rights awarded to the monks by the king was that of pannage – the right to graze pigs – wherever they wished within the afforested area. The implication from this award is that the district was still at least partly wooded, for pannage rights usually involved grazing on fallen acorns in oakwood areas in late autumn to fatten the pigs before slaughter in November. Permitting pannage activity may have been a preliminary stage to the opening up of parts of the district more generally to woodland clearance and development, for the disturbance to the ground caused by grazing pigs breaks root systems and prevents growth of seedlings, under-canopy shrubby plants and ground cover. The long rearguard action fought by the king's foresters in an attempt to prevent further inroads into the forest area for agricultural purposes, however, suggests that royal efforts to manage the economic development of the district met with limited success in the face of pressure for unrestricted access from both monastic exploiters and peasant developers.⁵⁴ As the assarting of the zone east of the road line intensified through the 1100s, that peasant-driven development pressure became increasingly difficult to resist. When the major religious corporations also threw their political and economic weight and their moral force behind the push to open up the heart of the region to intensive agricultural exploitation the pressure became too great to resist.

Charters recording property transactions in favour of the local abbeys of Dryburgh and Melrose reveal that the assarts that lined the Leader Valley from its confluence with the Tweed at 'Fauope' to 'Milcheside' just south of Lauder were all established by the central decades of the twelfth century and were nearing their full medieval extent by the early thirteenth century.⁵⁵ These records indicate that the clearance process had been begun by lay tenants of the Crown and great regional lords such as the Earl of Dunbar or the de Morville lords of Lauderdale, but with possession of most of the clearances being given over to the monasteries in a series of awards in the second half of the twelfth and first quarter of the thirteenth centuries. When fully developed, six of the seven known properties created through clearance operations stretched the full distance from the River Leader to Malcholmisrode, which might indicate that the road had provided the access point from which the work teams who were breaking the land into cultivation began. The seventh assart, however, the *sartum Alwini*, later known as Alwin's land,⁵⁶ extends only part way up the slope from the valley bottom and it appears that it may have begun in the vicinity of the now lost course of Dere Street in the valley bottom and worked westwards from there. In either situation, however, it is apparent from the layout of the properties that the roads provided the baseline from which development extended outwards into the waste.

Not all of the access roads that penetrated the hinterland of the settled and agriculturally developed area were used as springboards for assarting. Many were used to increase access to other resources that communities wished to exploit, principally grazing in upland areas or fuel reserves – usually of peat – in a zone of blanket bog. One much-cited example from Lauderdale relates to an access way to a peat moss through lands held by the monks of Melrose Abbey granted by Richard de Morville c. 1170 to the hospital of St Leonard near Lauder.⁵⁷ The brethren of the hospital were permitted to construct the section through the monks' land wide enough for two carts to pass. On the moss beyond this built section, the road is referred to as *viridem viam* (green way), suggesting that the stretch across the peatland was simply a worn trackway through the grass rather than a made-up route. Such 'green ways' were also a major feature of Melrose Abbey's estate, forming the drove ways along which the monastery's flocks and herds were moved between the precinct, granges and outlying estates, and the more established routes leading to the main markets at which the monks disposed of their livestock. These were the capillaries that connected

to the local arterial routes, which were then meshed into the major roads. It was down such systems that the monks were able to move their herds from the uplands of Kylesmuir in Ayrshire to the markets of Carlisle or across to the monastery itself, or their flocks or their wool clip from the heart of Ettrick and Eskdale to the fairs at Roxburgh and Carlisle.⁵⁸ In their fully developed medieval form at the start of the fourteenth century, the road network reached into almost every part of the Anglo-Scottish borderland and connected communities in the remote uplands with the political and economic power centres of the region.

The effects of these road systems at every level from high political to local economic cannot be overstated. Their greatest impacts and most enduring legacies, however, were in terms of environmental change. This aspect of the wider impact of the road network through the region between the Humber and Forth presents something of a contrast to Oliver Rackham's principally Midlands- and southern English-based picture of a long era of relatively stable wood cover and land use from later prehistory to the central Middle Ages:⁵⁹ north of the Humber – and more particularly north of the Tees beyond the northern limits of the old Roman civil province and subsequent zone of Anglian and later Scandinavian colonization centred on York – the eleventh to thirteenth centuries was an era of dynamic settlement expansion and profound landscape change.⁶⁰ Certainly, it is wrong to think of the spread of settlement and agriculture into the less developed and thinly populated zones of Pennine England and southern upland Scotland in terms of current inroads into the Amazonian rainforests, but nor was it simply a reintensification of use in a landscape that had existed in some kind of ecological stasis since the end of a previous peak period of exploitation by humans in the fifth century ce; the roads brought new settlers, new commercial opportunities and new socio-political imperatives that required new prescriptions for land use and regulation. All of the foregoing discussion has spoken of movements of people via these roads, settlement at nodal points along the system, or penetration of agriculture and other modes of exploitation from margins of the routeways.

Each of those actions, however, brought about a cumulative process of change as the human population used the roads as mechanisms to maximize exploitative opportunities. Charters, rental books and financial records reveal many of the consequences: the progressive decline of the few areas of large-scale climax woodland that had survived the deforestation of the prehistoric era through

over-exploitation for building timber or fuel, clearance for agriculture or overuse as pasture, which prevented regeneration; a new intensification of management of scrub species, like willow, hazel and alder, which had thrived in areas of formerly widespread land use where population and the acreage under cultivation had contracted sharply in the centuries between c. 400 and c. 1000;⁶¹ the disappearance of significant pig-herding operations, both as a result of their success in deliberate woodland clearance but also as a less welcome consequence of overgrazing in oak woodland; and the emergence of ecologically degraded upland grasslands, again through overgrazing but in this case by sheep.⁶² The roads had brought great economic prosperity to the region but at great environmental cost. Modern readers might regard as ironic the records of the transporting of bulk goods along the road from the port of Berwick to the inland burgh of Roxburgh, which included in the early 1330s an arrangement for the carriage of forty 'Estland' (eastern Baltic) sawn oak deals for repairs to the roof of the Franciscan friary at Roxburgh.⁶³ The king's high road between the burghs made the transportation of such commodities relatively straightforward, but the fact that timber was having to be imported from east central Europe underscores the scale of the landscape transformation to which those same roads had contributed; it was easier and cheaper to ship oak from Poland and Lithuania to Tweeddale, for by that date the once extensive oakwoods of the central southern uplands had been reduced to a few tightly controlled acres in the heart of Ettrick by over two centuries of relentless exploitation and clearance.

By 1300 a road system had penetrated almost every part of the Humber–Forth region and transformed it from a largely inaccessible tract of thinly settled and extensively exploited land into an easily traversed and heavily populated zone of intensively and in many ways overexploited countryside. The landscape of the Anglo-Scottish border zone, immortalized by the writing of Sir Walter Scott, is a modern literary and visual icon treasured for its subtleties of form and the richness of the sense of heritage that it evokes, but scratch away at the gilded veneer and leave the vehicles from which most of us view the panorama of grass- and heather-clad hills and we find an altogether more impoverished inheritance. Penetrated, packaged and plundered by our road-building ancestors, eight centuries of population pressures and intensive management of the land's resources delivered via an enveloping web of roads have irreversibly transformed the face of the land.

Notes

- 1 See, for example, Bryony Coles and John Coles, *Sweet Track to Glastonbury: The Somerset Levels in Prehistory* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986).
- 2 For the different processes involved in domination or conquest, see R. R. Davies, 'Patterns of domination', in *Domination and Conquest: The Experience of Ireland, Scotland and Wales 1100–1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 1–24.
- 3 See, for example, the essays in Alexander Fenton and Geoffrey Stell (eds), *Loads and Roads in Scotland and Beyond: Road Transport over 6000 Years* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1984).
- 4 R. W. Bradshaw, *Roman Roads* (Princes Risborough: Shire, 1979), p. 19.
- 5 G. Maxwell, 'The evidence from the Roman period', in Fenton and Stell (eds), *Loads and Roads in Scotland and Beyond*, pp. 22–48.
- 6 David J. Breeze, *The Northern Frontiers of Roman Britain* (London: Batsford, 1982), pp. 68–72.
- 7 For discussion of the changing nature of Roman frontier zones, see C. R. Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); Walter Pohl, Ian N. Wood and Helmut Reimitz (eds), *The Transformation of Frontiers: From Late Antiquity to the Carolingians* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).
- 8 Dorothy Whitelock (ed.), *English Historical Documents*, vol. 1: *c. 500–1042* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1968), p. 380. The frontier ran from the Thames up the River Lea to its source, then straight from there to Bedford, along the River Ouse from Bedford until the point where Watling Street crossed the river.
- 9 Maxwell, 'The evidence from the Roman period', p. 30.
- 10 James Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London: Hambledon, 2000), pp. 183–4; F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 289–90.
- 11 Robert Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 122 and 363.
- 12 David Rollason, *Northumbria, 500–100: Creation and Destruction of a Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 20–4.
- 13 *Regesta regum Scottorum*, vol. 1: *The Acts of Malcolm IV, King of Scots, 1153–1165*, ed. G. W. S. Barrow (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1960), no. 236.
- 14 Rollason, *Northumbria, 500–100*, pp. 274–5; Alex Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba: Scotland 789–1070* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 234.
- 15 Ian Blanchard, 'Lothian and beyond: the economy of the "English empire" of David I', in Richard Britnell and John Hatcher (eds), *Progress and Problems in Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Edward Miller* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 23–45.

- 16 James E. Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland: Scotland to 795* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 184–6, 202–3.
- 17 Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, pp. 130–3.
- 18 Richard Oram, *Domination and Lordship: Scotland 1070–1230* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 7.
- 19 For recent discussion of that realm, see Clare Downham, ‘Ireland’ and ‘England: from the conquest of York to the Battle of *Brunanburh*, 866–937’, in *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland: The Dynasty of Ívarr to AD 1014* (Edinburgh: Dunedin, 2007), pp. 11–62 and 107–36.
- 20 Maxwell, ‘The evidence from the Roman period’, p. 28; Breeze, *The Northern Frontiers of Roman Britain*, p. 45.
- 21 *Liber Sancte Marie de Melros: Munimenta vetustiora monasterii Cisterciensis de Melros*, ed. C. Innes (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1837), no. 244.
- 22 *The Charters of King David I*, ed. G. W. S. Barrow (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1999), no. 14.
- 23 Oram, *Domination and Lordship*, pp. 227–8.
- 24 Maxwell, ‘The evidence from the Roman period’, p. 33; Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/71990/details/torwood+raeburnfoot+newstead/>, accessed 12 July 2015.
- 25 For discussion of this historiography, see Richard Oram, ‘Saint and sinner: the historical reputation of David I’, in *David I: The King Who Made Scotland* (Stroud: Tempus, 2004), pp. 203–25; Oram, ‘Building the Scoto-Northumbrian realm, 1136–57’, in *Domination and Lordship*, pp. 74–114.
- 26 C. Martin and R. Oram, ‘Medieval Roxburgh: a preliminary assessment of the burgh and its locality’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 137 (2007), 357–404 (pp. 361 and 363).
- 27 *Regesta regum Scottorum, The Acts of Malcolm IV*, no. 216.
- 28 *Regesta regum Scottorum*, vol. 2: *The Acts of William I, King of Scots, 1165–1214*, ed. G. W. S. Barrow (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971), no. 376, comments to document no. 376; *Liber Sancte Marie de Melros* (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1837), nos 88, 90.
- 29 *Regesta regum Scottorum, The Acts of Malcolm IV*, no. 236. Nothing is known about this man but, given that the king was re-granting the property, it is possible that he had been the king’s cook.
- 30 Edinburgh, National Records of Scotland, GD40/1/23.
- 31 Maxwell, ‘The evidence from the Roman period’, pp. 33–4.
- 32 *Liber Sancte Marie de Melrose*, no. 101 (*viam que itur versus louueder per calceias*).
- 33 *English Episcopal Acta, 24: Durham 1153–1195*, ed. M. G. Snape (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), no. 102.
- 34 *Regesta regum Scottorum, The Acts of Malcolm IV*, no. 131.
- 35 *English Episcopal Acta, 24: Durham*, no. 96.
- 36 *English Episcopal Acta, 24: Durham*, no. 33.

- 37 *English Episcopal Acta*, 24: Durham, no. 4.
- 38 *English Episcopal Acta*, 24: Durham, no. 11.
- 39 *English Episcopal Acta*, 24: Durham, no. 267.
- 40 Oram, *Domination and Lordship*, pp. 240–5.
- 41 *Liber Sancte Marie de Melros*, no. 1; John Gilbert, *Hunting and Hunting Reserves in Medieval Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1979), p. 13; John Gilbert, 'The monastic record of a border landscape', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 99:1 (1983), 4–15 (4–6).
- 42 Richard Fawcett and Richard Oram, *Melrose Abbey* (Stroud: Tempus, 2004), pp. 213–21 and 148–52; Gilbert, 'The monastic record of a border landscape'.
- 43 Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/110849/details/girth-gate/>. Accessed 12 July 2015.
- 44 *Liber Sancte Marie de Melros*, no. 79.
- 45 G. W. S. Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), pp. 123–4.
- 46 R. P. Hardie, *The Roads of Medieval Lauderdale* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1942), pp. 92–6.
- 47 Gilbert, 'The monastic record of a border landscape', 8, fig. 4.
- 48 Gilbert, 'The monastic record of a border landscape', 12 and note 39; Hardie, *Roads of Medieval Lauderdale*; Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/71761/details/dere+street+border+newstead+elginhaugh/>, accessed 12 July 2015.
- 49 *Liber Sancte Marie de Dryburgh: Registrum cartarum Abacie Premonstratensis de Dryburgh*, ed. William Fraser (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1847), Appendix, part 1, no. i.
- 50 *Liber Sancte Marie de Melros*, no. 101 (Malcholmisrode); *Liber Sancte Marie de Dryburgh*, no. 113 (*via illa que ducit ad Lauder*).
- 51 General William Roy, *The Great Map: The Military Survey of Scotland, 1747–55* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2007), shows this route running from the bridge over the Tweed at Darnick west of Melrose and then climbing to the ridge between Lauderdale and the valley of the Ale Water before dropping to the floor of Lauderdale just south of Lauder.
- 52 Ian B. Cowan and David E. Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses: Scotland* (London: Longman, 1976), p. 184.
- 53 *Liber Sancte Marie de Melros*, no. 1; *The Charters of King David I*, no. 120.
- 54 Fawcett and Oram, *Melrose Abbey*, pp. 213–18; Gilbert, 'The monastic record of a border landscape', 5–9.
- 55 *Liber Sancte Marie de Dryburgh*, nos 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116; *Liber Sancte Marie de Melrose*, nos 12, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 99, 100, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106.

- 56 *Liber Sancte Marie de Dryburgh*, no. 110.
- 57 *Liber Sancte Marie de Dryburgh*, Appendix, no. 1.
- 58 Fawcett and Oram, *Melrose Abbey*, pp. 225–8, 240–1.
- 59 Oliver Rackham, 'From Claudius to Hugo de Northwold', in *Trees and Woodland in the British Landscape: The Complete History of Britain's Trees, Woods and Hedgerows*, rev. edn (London: Phoenix Press, 1990), pp. 39–58.
- 60 William E. Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North: The Region and its Transformation, 1000–1135* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), esp. chapter 6.
- 61 R. Tipping, 'Medieval woodland history from the Scottish southern uplands', in T. C. Smout (ed.), *Scottish Woodland History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), pp. 52–75 (pp. 66–7 and 68–71).
- 62 For discussion of these processes, see Richard Oram, 'Reworking old patterns: rural change, c. 1070–1230', in *Domination and Lordship*, pp. 233–64.
- 63 *Documents Illustrative of the History of Scotland 1286–1306*, ed. J. Stevenson, 2 vols (Edinburgh: H.M.S.O., 1870), vol. 1, p. 247; *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland (Rotuli scaccarii regum Scotorum)*, vol. 1: 1264–1359, ed. John Stuart and George Burnett (Edinburgh: H.M.S.O., 1878), p. 411.

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